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**History  
of  
Y.M.C.A.-Church Relations  
in the United States**

by  
**S. WIRT WILEY**

***ASSOCIATION PRESS***

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S. WIRT WILEY

## Glossary

CERTAIN TERMS have been used in the following pages to indicate a kind of gradation of relations between the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches. They may be defined roughly as follows:

*collaborate*: to work or act jointly, as in making a survey, planning or conducting a project or campaign.

*co-operate*: to give assistance one to another, but short of joint activity.

*mutual appreciation*: approval of and gratefulness for one another.

*indifference*: lack of interest, unresponsiveness.

*tension*: anxiety, apprehension, or strain because one is aware of another's disapproval, or fears that something being proposed or undertaken by the other will work to disadvantage; or because of consciously diverging purposes. Capable of being resolved into better understanding and more intelligent co-operation.

*friction*: disagreement tending to retard or prevent progress, with resulting irritation and criticism.

*conflict*: collision of interests, resulting in active opposition.



## Introduction

**R**ELATIONS WITH THE CHURCHES have always been a major concern of the Young Men's Christian Associations. It has never been easy to maintain relations that were mutually satisfactory, even though the major objectives of the Associations and the churches have been in harmony, and co-operation has been desired by both.

Here we have a non-ecclesiastical lay organization of men, whose controlling membership has always consisted of members of the churches, that has been designed to supplement and to strengthen the churches. Through nearly a century it has been growing in the scope of its service, and it has become established in more than sixty countries. It would be generally conceded that this Association has earned a recognized place within the Church Universal. But it possesses distinctive characteristics, arising from its non-ecclesiastical character, that differentiate it from the churches in their congregational, denominational, and confessional organization. That such a lay organization should have maintained its non-ecclesiastical character for nearly a century and, at the same time, have continued its close affiliation with the churches is an extraordinary phenomenon. The consideration of the conditions that are likely to be most conducive to the continuance of co-operation—and more fruitful co-operation—between the Young Men's Christian Associations and the churches is therefore a matter of considerable importance to both churches and Associations.

In recent years, the problem of co-operation has become more complicated as changes have taken place within the churches, within the Y.M.C.A., and in external factors im-

pinging upon both. Not least of the new factors has been the movement among Protestant churches to create official federations of churches and of church agencies. These federations logically assume some responsibilities that formerly were carried by the Y.M.C.A.'s and, at the same time, create new possibilities of co-operation between the Y.M.C.A.'s and themselves.

In the universities, and no less in the church-related colleges, the question of the basis of the most fruitful collaboration of the Christian Associations, the church organizations, and the administrations of the institutions continues to be acute. The wartime disturbance of campus life, especially where men are involved, and the post-war readjustments to follow will create a situation in which clear thinking and courageous action will be imperative.

The question of fundamental relations between the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s and the national denominational bodies, and between the Y.M.C.A. and the official interdenominational agencies, has become urgent. This has been vividly illustrated recently by the challenge of the Y.M.C.A.'s right to "represent" the Protestant Churches in the United Service Organizations (USO) for the service of the armed forces. The Y.M.C.A. had proceeded on the assumption that Protestantism would accept and use its services, and did so without seeking the specific recognition and endorsement of officially constituted denominational or interdenominational bodies.

Official collaboration of the denominations through joint agencies has advanced to the point where an increasing desire has arisen within those agencies to appropriate exclusively to themselves the term "interdenominational," and so dispel the presumption that non-ecclesiastic organizations like the Y.M.C.A. bear any comparable relation to the Churches.

The merger of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and seven other official interdenomi-



national agencies<sup>1</sup> into a National Council of Churches, now proposed, would magnify this distinction in their relation to the Churches between these official agencies and such affiliated but independent organizations as the American Bible Society, the Student Volunteer Movement, the Y.W.C.A., and the Y.M.C.A. The proposed merger makes more urgent than ever a clear definition of relationships and a mutually agreed-upon distinction between the responsibilities of such a National Council of the Churches and of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s.

Some church officials believe that many Y.M.C.A.'s and the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s itself are no longer strictly Protestant organizations. They say that this necessarily affects the possible relationships of the Associations within organized Protestantism. Y.M.C.A. leaders have been slow to recognize or to admit this problem; rather, they emphasize the contribution of the Y.M.C.A. to inter-confessional good will.

The organization of a World Council of Churches, which has been in progress since 1937, involving not only Protestant denominations but Eastern Orthodox Churches, adds to the complexity of the Y.M.C.A.-Church relations. The effect of world relationships upon national relationships and, in turn, of these upon local relationships makes it imperative that no mistake be made in regard to the Y.M.C.A.'s organizational arrangements within the total ecumenical structure.

The matter of primary importance, however, is not that the relations of the Y.M.C.A. and the churches should be agreeable and comfortable. The important thing is that their combined impact upon a needy world should be as

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<sup>1</sup>International Council of Religious Education, Foreign Missions Conference of North America, Home Missions Council of North America, Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, Council of Church Boards of Education, United Stewardship Council, and United Council of Church Women.

fruitful as it can be made. Fortunately, until now unity of aim and unity of spirit have overbalanced all diversities of programs and all imperfections of organizational arrangements. But now, more than ever, unnecessary frictions have become intolerable hindrances to the common task of furthering the kingdom of God.

The Research Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s has recently considered so important the task of making more fruitful adjustments and readjustments in the relations of the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches that it has designated this as one of the major areas for concentration in research.

As the Y.M.C.A.'s celebrate in 1944 the completion of the first century of organizations bearing that name, it seems clear that a thorough reconsideration of Y.M.C.A.-Church relations is one of the essential steps in planning for their second century.

It is clear that the specific solutions of present problems will not be found in the history of the past. It seems equally clear, however, that the nature of present problems cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of how they came to be what they are. The writer is confirmed in this opinion by the clarification of his own thinking that has resulted from the study reported in this book.

In this study, an attempt has been made to get back of the declared policies of the Y.M.C.A.'s, in relation to the churches, to the *actual service* of the Associations to the churches and of the churches to the Associations—to the actual service of the Associations rendered *on behalf of* the churches and to the actual *collaboration* of the churches and Associations on co-operative projects. An attempt was made to examine the changes that have taken place in the policies, point of view, activities, and practices of both churches and Associations, and to discover the effect of such changes upon the relations of the two. Points of tension and dissatisfaction were identified. The nature and origin of these tensions and strains were studied. On the other hand, the conditions in which appreciation and

co-operation have been most enthusiastic and effective were sought. The difference in relations with different denominations and with their local churches was examined.

The origin and development of the Federation Movement among the Protestant Churches, nationally and locally, was given study, as was the relation of the Y.M.C.A.'s thereto. The progress of the Interfaith Movement was noted. The still earlier broadening of the membership composition of the Y.M.C.A.'s was studied, and its possible contribution to interconfessional and interfaith understanding examined. Likewise, the Community Organization Movement was reviewed, and an attempt made to appraise its influence upon the Y.M.C.A.'s relations to the churches. The Ecumenical Movement among the churches and other religious organizations was traced; and the part the Y.M.C.A. has had in bringing it about, together with possible relations in the future, were considered.

Through the whole investigation, it was sought to identify the present problem areas and to understand what is the essential nature of the problem in each.

References and bibliography will reveal the sources from which data have been gathered, but special mention should be made of a series of seven studies made between 1908 and 1934, under the direction of commissions appointed by the National Y.M.C.A. All of them involved surveys of Y.M.C.A.-Church relations and practices in local communities. Four dealt also with national relations. There were other extended studies of relations in colleges and universities reported in 1935 and 1941. While these surveys were not made according to a uniform plan that would make possible detailed comparisons from period to period, and while the merit of the methods used varied, the reports provide a great amount of valuable data covering a quarter of a century.

Two of the commissions were composed predominantly of clergymen, and two of the other studies were made under a commission composed wholly of clerical delegates of

the denominations. Quotations have been made *in extenso* from these particular reports because they appear to be relatively free from bias favorable to the Y.M.C.A.

It is inevitable, however, that the writer's experience should enter into the entire interpretation and even into the selection of quotations. He hopes that his thirty-five years of experience in dealing practically with Y.M.C.A.-Church relations in cities in which those relations have been happy and fruitful, and for four years of that time as associate general secretary of the National Council, may have given him somewhat dependable perspective and balanced judgment. He also served on six of the eight commissions referred to above. The term "churchman" might not improperly be applied to him, since he has been an ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church for a quarter of a century. At various periods he has been a member and active worker in United Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Congregational churches.

This book is offered as a background for those who may engage in the study of current conditions and in planning for the future.

## CHAPTER I

# Y.M.C.A.-Church Relations in the Making (1851 to 1865)

THE FIRST YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION organized in the United States set a pattern of relationships with the churches that eventually, in its essentials, became universal in this country. Although there have been adjustments to changing conditions and the circle of co-operating churches has been enlarged, that pattern powerfully influences the relationships of the present day. This first Association was organized in Boston, in 1851.

The principal instigator of the Boston Association was Captain Thomas V. Sullivan,<sup>1</sup> a fifty-one-year-old sea captain who had retired at the age of thirty-six to devote himself to religious work among seamen. For a number of years, he had served as chaplain for the American Bethel Society, working among sailors on the Great Lakes. In 1847, he established himself "as marine missionary at large for the port of Boston." In that capacity, he rallied around himself a group of businessmen who contributed to his support and a group of young men who assisted him in his work. These men came from the membership of various Boston churches.

"Captain Sullivan was a man of marked denominational liberality. He was an advocate of religious work on a union basis, and his missions were conducted on that plan."<sup>2</sup> His interest in developing a religious organization

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<sup>1</sup> See Doggett, L. L., *History of the Boston Y.M.C.A.* (New York, Association Press, 1901), pp. 4 to 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

among young men in Boston took definite form after reading an article in the *Baptist Watchman and Reflector*, written by a theological student from New York who was then studying at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. This article described in considerable detail the Young Men's Christian Association in London, its activities and facilities. The London Y.M.C.A. was seven years old at the time.

### Relation of the Y.M.C.A. to Protestant Evangelical Churches

The first meeting of thirty-two young men that was assembled to discuss the organization of an Association was representative of "some twenty churches." This meeting was held in a church, and the next meeting was held in another church. There appears to have been no thought but that the control of the new Association should be vested in members of Protestant churches. The only discussion was as to whether the controlling membership should include members of all those churches or only of the evangelical<sup>3</sup> churches. Boston was then and long had been the center of controversy between the trinitarian and the unitarian churches.

The advice of the leading clergymen<sup>4</sup> of the four major evangelical denominations (Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Protestant Episcopal) was sought. Although consulted separately, these clergymen all advised that the controlling membership be restricted to evangelical churches. This provision was incorporated in the constitution. A provision for other young men was made through an "associate membership." This basis of control afterward became generally designated as the "evangelical

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<sup>3</sup> The term "evangelical," in the United States, is commonly applied to churches called *orthodox*, as distinguished from Unitarians, Universalists, and so forth.

<sup>4</sup> Doggett, *op. cit.*, pp. 11 to 12.

basis" or as the "evangelical church-membership basis of control."

It is of considerable significance that in the same month, in Boston, there was organized a Young Men's Christian Union<sup>5</sup> that did not restrict its controlling membership to members of churches. As a matter of fact, it was always chiefly representative of the Unitarians and Universalists. This society continues to exist, but it was never widely copied. While there has been some occasional rivalry locally, the relations between the Union and the Y.M.C.A. have been cordial from the beginning.

Whatever may have been the controversial aspect of the basis of controlling or "active" membership adopted at the time, from a practical standpoint it did three very important things:

1. It definitely related the Boston Association to the evangelical churches in a manner and to a degree that had not been done by the earlier Y.M.C.A.'s in England. The English Associations had a purely personal basis for membership, defined by the Associations themselves. "Members must be young men who give decided evidence of conversion to God."<sup>6</sup> Their basis not only admitted non-church members to participation in control, but is reported to have made the Y.M.C.A. particularly attractive to some men who were out of sympathy with the churches.<sup>7</sup>

2. It affiliated the Boston Association with the largest group of churches whose members could then work together aggressively in an organization that was essentially religious—a very important principle.

3. It avoided ecclesiastical control, and so assured the lay character of the Association and made possible a large degree of independence in its action.

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<sup>5</sup> Doggett, L. L., *History of the Y.M.C.A.* (New York, Association Press, 1922), Vol. I, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> Doggett, *History of the Boston Y.M.C.A.*, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

## Co-operation with the churches

While the non-ecclesiastical, lay character of the Young Men's Christian Association was established from the beginning in Boston and elsewhere, and has been more jealously maintained than almost any other characteristic, the encouragement and co-operation of great numbers of the clergy was received in the beginning and has been enjoyed to the present.

The Association in Boston made a systematic effort to attract young men coming to that city, and then to relate them to the churches of their choice. Within a few years, it began to conduct large evangelistic meetings and to make these the means of interesting young men in church membership.

The Association, from the beginning, considered one of its major contributions to the churches to be that of increasing the spirit of unity among the churches and of giving this spirit expression through the Association's various activities. It encouraged the ministers of all the evangelical churches to frequent its rooms, and there to find fellowship with one another.<sup>8</sup>

From the churches the Association received its workers, and from church laymen it secured its financial support. The ministers of the evangelical churches assisted through speaking and teaching, and in other ways.

Criticism of the new Association was not lacking. When a Sunday evening lectureship was developed, and prominent clergymen from all over New England and New York were brought as speakers, a good many ministers complained about this competition with their own church services.

One of the most effective stimuli that led to the widespread organization of Y.M.C.A.'s during the early 1850's was the mailing of ten thousand copies of the constitution and by-laws of the Boston Y.M.C.A. to the ministers and

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.



leading men of evangelical churches in New England, and of additional copies to many others throughout the land. This was done, in the first place, to get the recipients to refer to the Association young men coming to Boston.<sup>9</sup> As a result of this publicity, in part at least, practically every new Association was organized with the blessing and the encouragement of both evangelical ministers and laymen. Within two years Y.M.C.A.'s were organized in twenty-four cities in the United States, including such widely separated cities as New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and New Orleans.

### Evangelical church-membership basis of control

A majority of the early Associations adopted the evangelical church-membership basis of control, but some did not.<sup>10</sup> When the first steps were taken to form a federation of Y.M.C.A.'s at Buffalo, in 1854, one of the difficult problems turned around this matter of the evangelical church-membership basis.

This first American Y.M.C.A. convention consisted of thirty-seven delegates from nineteen societies, of whom thirty-four were laymen. There was scarcely a man forty years of age among them, the majority being under thirty and their leader only twenty-three. The nineteen Associations were scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Gulf to Toronto, Canada. These young men laying the foundations of a great movement adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, That while we agree in the importance of an evangelical basis for the operation of our Associations, and while we look to members of these churches for our leading and governing influences, and in order to preserve the Christian element, we recommend that such only should *hold office, or vote* on alterations of the constitution; this convention is decidedly of the opinion that the *qualifications for the dif-*

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<sup>9</sup> See Second Annual Report of the Boston Y.M.C.A., in *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Doggett, *History of the Y.M.C.A.*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 138-139.

*ferent kinds of membership* can be best determined by each Association for itself, as being the best judges of the circumstances of the case, and that uniformity of action cannot, without greater experience, be asked or expected of our Associations by this convention.

The World Conference of Y.M.C.A.'s, which met in Paris, France, the next year (1855), adopted a statement as to whom the Associations "seek to unite," but it set forth a personal and not a church-membership test of eligibility. An American delegate, the Reverend Abel Stevens of New York, proposed a basis of union containing five articles, the first of which was "that the Associations should be managed by members of evangelical churches."<sup>11</sup> A delegate from Strassburg pointed out that this provision "would not be applicable in Europe, seeing that here we have evangelical churches the membership of which does not necessarily imply any personal profession." In the "established" churches of Europe, membership was a status accorded to all; and in some "free" churches, membership was a matter of formal induction upon reaching a certain age. In America, however, where all churches were "free," church membership for the most part was evidence of personal commitment to the faith and purposes of the church. Upon the motion of the delegate from Strassburg, the following basis was unanimously adopted:

The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their doctrine and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His kingdom among young men.

That so-called "Paris Basis" has continued to the present to be the basis of affiliation of national federations of Y.M.C.A.'s in the World's Alliance. It is the more significant, therefore, that the international organization of Y.M.C.A.'s in the United States and Canada from its be-

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174 to 176.

ginning encouraged, and later insisted upon, the evangelical church-membership basis of control in its member Associations and established the same requirement for representatives in the international body itself. This American basis has always been considered to be in accord with the Paris basis, but more restrictive.

### **Areas of tension**

The "free" character of the American churches, their evangelistic spirit, and the large place taken by laymen in their affairs were probably reasons why the Y.M.C.A.'s in America established a relationship to the churches different from that in Britain and on the continent of Europe.

There probably was no Y.M.C.A. that did not enjoy the approval and co-operation of most of the Protestant ministers most of the time. This was partly because of the Association's declared relation to the churches, but doubtless more because the Associations in the main contributed to those purposes that both the lay and clerical leaders considered important. Approval and co-operation appear to have been most enthusiastic—especially on the part of the clergy—when Associations contributed directly to the strengthening of churches as institutions, particularly by increasing their membership and training their lay workers.

Nevertheless, there were tensions and strains. These tensions and strains were between particular Associations and the churches of their communities—usually only some of the churches. Tension and strain have never characterized the relations of all Y.M.C.A.'s and all churches at any one time.

In the earliest period—before the Civil War—a good many ministers feared that the Y.M.C.A. might become another Church, or might attempt to take the place of the churches. Most Y.M.C.A.'s engaged in general evangelism, and did not confine their efforts to young men. Some of their leaders criticized the churches and the min-

isters, as doubtless did some of the evangelists whom the Y.M.C.A. used. Such criticism was resented and returned in kind. Some churches did not approve of the type of religious activities conducted by some Y.M.C.A.'s. Other churches—at least their ministers—felt that their returns in the matter of new members was not commensurate with the support in time and money given by their members. On the other hand, Y.M.C.A. leaders complained that the support of the churches in workers and in money was not as great as the Association had a right to expect.

Upon the Y.M.C.A.'s fell the major burden of adjustment, because they professed from the beginning to be the "children" and the "servants" of the churches. Adjustment was not easy, because of the lay and non-ecclesiastical character of the Associations; because of their emphasis upon "union" activities and their disparagement of denominational divisions; because of the youthfulness of most of their leaders, their unconventional methods, and their aggressiveness.

### **The Laymen's Revival of 1857-1858**

In the Laymen's Revival, which spread across the country in 1857-1858, the Y.M.C.A.'s and the evangelical churches co-operated actively.<sup>12</sup> After several years of general prosperity in the United States, business activity began to falter in 1853, resulting in a depression in 1854 and 1855. Following a period of revival of prosperity, during 1856 and early 1857, there occurred in October, 1857, a financial panic so overwhelming that it almost paralyzed the monetary system of the country.<sup>13</sup> This panic was accompanied by thousands of businessmen turning to the consideration of other than worldly matters, and by a marvelous religious awakening that stirred the whole nation.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 279 to 288.

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell, Wesley C., *Business Cycles* (New York, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1930), pp. 426-427.

The Revival of 1857-1858 followed, in the main, the pattern of a noontday union prayer meeting started by the New York Y.M.C.A. in 1856, in a Dutch Reformed church on Fulton Street. In the autumn of 1857, this meeting was resumed under the leadership of the Dutch Reformed denomination, but on a union basis with the Y.M.C.A. co-operating. The Y.M.C.A. conducted or stimulated similar laymen's prayer meetings in all parts of New York City. The movement spread across the country, until there was reported to be a noon prayer meeting for laymen led by laymen in every city and town from New York to Omaha. Wherever there was a Y.M.C.A., a union noon prayer meeting was started. Some Associations, following the lead of Cincinnati, sent out delegations of laymen to speak in surrounding cities and towns, and to initiate such prayer meetings.

The movement spread far beyond the Y.M.C.A.'s. At one time a hundred and fifty such meetings were held in New York City daily. In some cities, notably Boston, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati, great meetings were held in tents and tabernacles, seating thousands. The revival, with amazing spontaneity, became the dominant interest of the churches throughout the country. Unprecedented numbers were added to the membership of the churches.

The Y.M.C.A., being the one union evangelistic organization of the time, it was apparently looked upon as the sponsor nationally. The number of Associations quickly doubled. In a good many communities, because of its power to stimulate and give direction to such a great union movement of laymen, the Association was praised to the disparagement of the churches. Some influential individuals asserted that, as a union movement, it would supplant the denominations. These things aroused fears in the hearts of many ministers that for many years continued to plague the Associations.

The Associations themselves were diverted from their distinctive work among young men into evangelism for the

general public, away from the special field in which they had been welcomed by the clergy to the general field where the clergy rightly felt that the churches must accept and carry the responsibility. The Y.M.C.A.'s organized during this revival (nearly a hundred in number) were essentially organizations for general evangelism. At the Convention of 1859, there was a great debate over the function of the Associations: general evangelism versus specialized work among young men. General evangelism won by a large majority. On the whole, however, where calmer judgment prevailed among the leaders of the Associations, the Y.M.C.A.'s gained greatly in the esteem of both laymen and clergy by their part in this great Laymen's Revival.

### **The United States Christian Commission**

The participation of the Y.M.C.A. in the Revival of 1857-1858 prepared the way for the leadership it was able to contribute to the service of church people in the Union Army and Navy in the Civil War. Immediately upon the outbreak of war in April, 1861, the Associations of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Washington, and Chicago appointed committees and began serving the spiritual and material needs of soldiers and sailors in transit, in camps, and in hospitals. Others followed their example. In this work they co-operated intimately with the chaplains.

Soon it became apparent that the task required a special agency, national in scope. In November, 1861, a special Convention of the Associations was convened in New York, attended by fifty delegates from fifteen Associations. This Convention set up the United States Christian Commission and appointed its twelve members. The Convention recommended that each Association appoint an Army Committee, to be in charge of the collecting, receiving and transmitting of contributions of all kinds for the soldiers; and that each Association immediately institute measures, by public meetings and otherwise, to

obtain funds to meet the expenses of the work of the Commission. "The Christian Commission was formed to do whatever might be found possible and needful, in addition to governmental provision, for the bodies and souls of the men of the army and navy."<sup>14</sup>

No formal understandings were entered into between the Y.M.C.A. and the churches. Such a procedure probably did not occur to anyone. There was not then, and not until nearly fifty years later, any body officially representing the denominations. For the ten-year-old Y.M.C.A. to have sought the official endorsement of the many separate denominational bodies would have been an interminable, if not impossible, task. The Associations had only local relations with the churches. Moreover, to have secured the co-operation of some denominations, but not all the leading ones, might have hindered rather than helped.

The Associations recognized their duty "to take active measures to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the soldiers in the army and the sailors in the navy, in co-operation with the chaplains."<sup>15</sup> This duty arose out of their ability to serve young men, which had been previously demonstrated. The Association leaders assumed that they were executing the will of the churches.

Four of the twelve original members appointed on the Christian Commission were clergymen. When, in 1865, its membership had grown to forty-seven, it included fourteen clergymen. Yet throughout it had been a non-ecclesiastical body.

Local churches all over the "loyal states" raised money and collected supplies for the Commission. The main dependence of the Commission for funds was upon public collections in the churches and at public meetings.<sup>16</sup> Ministers constituted almost one half of the nearly five

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<sup>14</sup> Moss, Lemuel, *Annals of the United States Christian Commission* (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1868), p. 734.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 522.

thousand "delegates," as the volunteer workers were called who went out to the camps, battlefields, and hospitals for periods of approximately six weeks. The proportion of ministers increased as the war went on.

The Christian Commission was slow in getting under way. During the first eight or nine months, its very continuance seems to have been uncertain. It did not know exactly what to do or how to do it. The American people had not previously engaged in war on any such large scale. There was confusion in the government, in the military establishment, everywhere. The proportions and duration of the war were only dimly grasped during 1861. During the first half of its first year, 1862, the Commission received less than six thousand dollars in money and less than twelve thousand dollars worth of supplies. Its organization was inadequate and unstable. Its relations with the military authorities were cordial, but specific arrangements had to be worked out through experience.

There appears to have been a widespread desire among the clergy and lay leaders of the churches to evangelize the Army. All sorts of groups sought access to the camps, and the distribution of religious literature was undertaken by many. Confusion and disappointment resulted. It was natural that criticism of the Christian Commission arose, especially among those who had had high hopes for it.

Individual Y.M.C.A.'s were sending volunteer workers to near-by camps to serve the soldiers in whatever ways they found possible. After battles, some of them sent delegations to regiments from their communities to carry supplies and to render personal service to the wounded. Gradually, a pattern emerged. In May, 1862, the Philadelphia Y.M.C.A. sent, under the auspices of the Christian Commission, a delegation of ten ministers and four laymen to visit the Army for personal work among the soldiers. This was the beginning of a unique and mighty movement, in which, as has been said, before the end of the war nearly five thousand volunteer "delegates" had par-



ticipated. Gradually, the service of the churches, the Y.M.C.A.'s, and other religious societies were concentrated in the Commission.

More than two and a half million dollars was received in cash; and the estimated value of supplies, publications, and services donated (exclusive of those of the delegates) was nearly three million dollars. There were distributed nearly three million Bibles, Testaments, and hymnbooks; over nine million books, magazines, and pamphlets; more than eighteen million religious newspapers; and thirty-nine million pages of tracts. Dôuay Bibles, contributed by Catholics, were distributed to Catholic soldiers. Through personal contact in serving the sick, the wounded, the disconsolate, and the penitent, through religious services, through the distribution of supplies, through the portable "diet kitchens," through the writing of letters for soldiers, through the encouragement of the soldiers' own regimental Christian Associations, and through many other personal services, the volunteer delegates represented to the soldiers their homes and their churches, and had a tremendous influence for good. It was upon the work of the delegates that the success of the Commission depended.

The work of the Christian Commission became a huge enterprise before the end of the war, far beyond the capacity of the ten-year-old Y.M.C.A. But the Y.M.C.A. had served the churches in setting up the Commission as the rallying center for their energies and resources. The Christian Commission's attitude was expressed in its final report: "The churches gave us a specific work to do. That work we have pursued strictly and with such success as has been granted unto the end."

The American Bible Society, the two national Tract Societies, and the American Sunday School Union early began their characteristic services to the armed forces, and the first three continued their work independently to the end of the war. These societies were related to the churches

in much the same way as the Y.M.C.A.'s and the Christian Commission. At first, there appeared to be considerable confusion and some duplication of effort. There were no precedents to guide in the division of labor or even the methods to be pursued. But good will and co-operation among these religious societies seems to have prevailed. The American Bible Society was credited with having supplied the Christian Commission with copies of the Scriptures to the approximate value of a hundred and eighty thousand dollars. The Christian Commission also distributed large numbers of the publications of the Tract Societies.

During the Civil War, the number of local Y.M.C.A.'s dropped from two hundred and forty to sixty.<sup>17</sup> The contribution of the several remaining Associations to the work of the Christian Commission had varied, but on the whole it had been very great. Some, like the New York Association, continued a large service to soldiers and sailors under their own auspices. The first general convention called during the war, meeting in Chicago in 1863, was devoted chiefly to the work of the Christian Commission.<sup>18</sup> As the originator and sponsor of the Commission, the Y.M.C.A. at the close of the war found that it had advanced greatly in the esteem of church leaders and of the general public. Beginning with 1866, the revival of local Y.M.C.A.'s and the organization of new ones once again swept across the country.

## Summary

During the first fifteen years, the Y.M.C.A.'s in the United States had allied themselves with the evangelical Protestant churches; had developed methods of co-operating with local churches, especially through evangelism; had taken a leading part in an extraordinary nation-wide

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<sup>17</sup> Doggett, *History of the Boston Y.M.C.A.*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

religious revival led by laymen; and had set up an organization, the Christian Commission, for serving the Union armed forces in the Civil War that had received the cooperation and support of Protestant churches throughout the North. Rather a remarkable beginning! Nevertheless, anxiety had been created in the minds of many members of the clergy lest the Y.M.C.A. become another Church or an organization competing with the churches.

## CHAPTER II

# Y.M.C.A. Program and Relationships Assume a Definite Character (1865 to 1900)

### Non-ecclesiastical evangelical character of the Y.M.C.A. defined

TWO ISSUES DISTURBED THE relations of the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches during the years immediately following the Civil War. In the first place, many Associations continued to engage in general evangelism for both men and women, operated mission Sunday Schools, and engaged in other activities that were undoubtedly among the normal functions of the churches. Duplication of effort and competition resulted. Where the Associations were strong and aggressive, some people continued to assert that they constituted a new development of a united Church that should supplant the many denominations. Moreover, many of the newly organized Y.M.C.A.'s did not confine their controlling membership to the members of evangelical churches. The International Convention at Chicago, in 1863, had refused to be bound by the requirements for membership established by the original Confederation. The Convention at Albany, New York, in 1866, had recommended that "only *Christian* young men be admitted to active membership." By 1868, of the two hundred and sixteen Associations reporting to the Convention at Detroit, only two thirds were on the evangelical church basis. Many church leaders, therefore, were insisting that the Associations, individually and collectively, declare them-

selves loyal to the churches and subordinate to them in the loyalty of their members. This, in the minds of many, involved the restriction of the Associations' field of endeavor to young men.

The second issue was whether the Associations should ally themselves with the evangelical churches only. The reaction to the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, in 1859, had been a tightening of the lines of orthodoxy. On the other hand, the non-evangelical churches had assumed a new aggressiveness. A convention of Unitarians, Universalists, and other "liberals" was held in Rochester, New York, in the late 1860's. Views regarded as extremely unorthodox were voiced by some of the speakers and were given wide publicity in the press. This served to alarm evangelicals even far from New England, which was the principal seat of Unitarianism.

The growing disposition toward co-operation among the evangelical churches had been accelerated by happy experiences in "union" activities during the revival of 1857-1858 and in the Christian Commission. But the division between the evangelicals and non-evangelicals was becoming sharper than ever. By 1868, the necessity of defining officially the relation of the Y.M.C.A.'s to the churches had come to a head. In that year, the International Convention adopted the Protestant evangelical church-membership basis of control; and the next year, 1869, it adopted its famous definition of an evangelical church, at Portland, Maine.<sup>1</sup> By these actions, the Y.M.C.A. did two things:

1. It made clear that it had no intention of becoming another Church.
2. It confirmed its alliance with the evangelical group

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<sup>1</sup> The Convention of 1868 at Detroit resolved:

"That as these organizations bear the name of Christian, and profess to be engaged directly in the Saviour's service, so it is clearly their duty

of Protestant churches, which pleased the evangelical and displeased the non-evangelical churches.

### **Field restricted to young men**

After 1870, the Y.M.C.A.'s, in their International Conventions, agreed more and more that young men constituted the distinctive field of endeavor of the Associations, and that a major purpose of the Associations should be to relate young men to the evangelical churches as members. Local Associations increasingly conformed to the national policy, and mutual appreciation between the Associations and the churches increased.

There continued, however, a marked difference between Associations. New York led as the champion of a fourfold program of work among young men. Chicago, under the

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to maintain the control and management of all their affairs in the hands of those who profess to love, and publicly avow their faith in Jesus, the Redeemer, as divine, and who testify their faith by becoming and remaining members of churches held to be evangelical, and that such persons and none others, should be allowed to vote and hold office."

The Convention of 1869, held at Portland, Maine, reaffirmed the action of 1868; and in response to an inquiry as to whether the non-evangelicals, excluded by the Boston Association in 1851, were now to be regarded as evangelical, adopted the following definition:

"And we hold those churches to be evangelical which, maintaining the Holy Scriptures to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice, do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (the only begotten of the Father, King of kings, and Lord of lords, in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and who was made sin for us, though knowing no sin, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree), as the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved from everlasting punishment, and unto life eternal." [The clause "and unto life eternal" was added by the International Convention of 1893.]

"That Associations organized after this date shall be entitled to representation in future conferences of the Associated Young Men's Christian Associations of North America, upon condition that they be severally composed of young men in communion with evangelical churches (provided that in places where Associations are formed by a single denomination, members of other denominations are not excluded therefrom), and active membership and the right to hold office be conferred only upon young men who are members in good standing in evangelical churches."

leadership of Dwight L. Moody, continued to devote itself largely to general evangelism until about 1880. By that time, Moody himself had become convinced, by experience and observation, that the distinctive work of the Y.M.C.A.'s was the fourfold development of young men, and that one could not successfully be both a local Y.M.C.A. secretary and an evangelist.<sup>2</sup> The State Committees of New England continued until about 1880 to make the promotion of general evangelism their principal business.

As late as June, 1878, the Conference of General Secretaries found it necessary to take note of charges that:

... the Associations have engaged in criticism of the official actions of evangelical ecclesiastical bodies; that others have administered the ordinances of the church; that they are seeking directly or indirectly by lay evangelism and a new church organization to supplant or supplement existing church organizations on one hand, or to disseminate Plymouth and anti-church views on the other.<sup>3</sup>

These charges appeared serious enough to call for resolutions declaring:

... that the Associations are not political or merely moral reform organizations, nor substitutes for, nor rivals of the churches of Christ; that they hold the obligation and duty of their members to the churches with which they are connected as prior to those due to the Associations; that they recognize and uphold a Divinely appointed ministry; that they hold that questions of doctrine or polity as to which the various branches of the Evangelical churches are not agreed, are questions with which as Associations they have nothing whatever to do.<sup>4</sup>

By 1890, the Y.M.C.A.'s were generally acceptable to the evangelical churches as an agency of the churches

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<sup>2</sup> Moody, W. R., *The Life of D. L. Moody* (New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900), p. 127. See also Doggett, L. L., *Life of Robert R. McBurney* (Cleveland, Ohio, T. M. Barton, 1922), p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> See quotation from the *Commercial Advertiser* (Buffalo, New York, June 8, 1878), on file in the National Council library, New York City.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

whose control was in the hands of members of evangelical Protestant churches, and one of whose primary purposes was to strengthen the churches by winning young men to church membership and by serving young men in ways in which the churches were not able to serve them.<sup>5</sup>

The following is an extract from "The Relation of the Young Men's Christian Associations to the Churches," by the Reverend Edwin F. See, general secretary of the Brooklyn Y.M.C.A., which appeared in the *Christian Union* for December 16, 1886. It throws considerable light upon the situation confronting the churches, which required the co-operation of an organization concentrating upon work among young men.

In order to understand what this relation is we must first appreciate the attitude of young men toward the church. Need it be said that it is one of indifference and aversion? Only five per cent of the young men of today are church members, only fifteen per cent attend church with any regularity, and seventy-five per cent never attend church at all. In a city of 19,000 population it was found there were 3,500 young men, and 85 of them members of Protestant churches; in another of 20,000, 3,500 young men, and 29 of them members of Protestant churches; in another of 20,000, 4,000 young men, and 38 of them joined the churches during one year; in another of 17,000, 3,000 young men, and 356 of them church members; in another of 20,000, 4,000 young men, and 236 of them church members; in another of 32,000, 5,000 young men, and 105 of them received into 21 churches during the year; in another of 38,000, 6,000 young men, and five per cent of them church attendants; in another of 12,000, 2,500 young men, and six per cent of them church attendants. These figures prove what experience must already have taught us, that the average young men has no love for the church, no attachment to the clergy, and no inclination toward worship.

It was the situation here described by him that had led See to give up a highly successful pastorate in Albany,

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<sup>5</sup> See addresses in 1890 by the Reverend A. H. Scott of Perth, Ontario, at a Canadian Y.M.C.A. conference, and by the Reverend R. J. McBryde, D.D., of Lexington, Virginia, at the Chautauqua Assembly, Lexington, Kentucky, on file in the National Council library, New York City.



N. Y., to accept the general secretaryship of the Brooklyn Y.M.C.A. shortly before these lines were written.

During these early periods, the city Y.M.C.A.'s co-operated with the churches primarily as evangelistic agencies; intensifying the religious zeal of church young men by means of prayer meetings; holding evangelistic meetings, often in jail and among other groups of unfortunates; conducting mission Sunday Schools; and, in the later years, participating actively in union evangelistic campaigns led by Dwight L. Moody and other general evangelists of the times. Church attendance was generally promoted among young men away from home, and the names of all who were led to make decisions in Y.M.C.A. meetings were referred to the ministers. The club rooms, and later the buildings, of the Associations were considered by the churches to be valuable places of social resort for their own young men, and to be the means of bringing other young men under church influence.

### **The "Y" as an interdenominational lay organization**

The ministers of many churches addressed meetings under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A. and encouraged the laymen of their churches to support the Y.M.C.A. with their services and their money. It must be borne in mind, however, that there were great differences between the churches of different denominations, and consequently much difference in their attitudes toward the work of the Y.M.C.A.'s. Episcopalian and Lutheran clergy generally were skeptical about the Association's mass evangelism and about the teaching of religion by laymen in the Y.M.C.A. Methodists and Baptists, on the other hand, commonly heartily approved; while Congregationalists and Presbyterians seem to have varied more in their opinions. There was a difference between the attitudes of high churchmen and low churchmen among the Episcopalians. Generally speaking, it would seem that the more closely a Church had been identified with the Evangelical Revival of the

early nineteenth century, of which the Y.M.C.A. was one of the fruits, the more interested were the clergy and the people of that Church in the Association.

The peculiar possibilities of an interdenominational<sup>6</sup> lay organization seem to have been recognized generally by the clergy by the early 1870's. Some convention addresses of clergymen that have been preserved indicate a recognition that the services of ministers, even as members of the Associations, were characteristically different from those of laymen.<sup>7</sup> The layman, just because he was a layman, had a different access to the fellowship and confidence of young men. Moreover, there was a layman's point of view, which, while different from that of the clergy, was accepted as valid.

While appreciation and approval of the Y.M.C.A.'s by ministers appears to have been general by 1890, the annual reports of the Associations reveal much less specifically religious instruction and evangelism than in these latter days are supposed to have been common at that time. By

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<sup>6</sup> The term "interdenominational" is used here as it was commonly used during the period under discussion. The nature of the Y.M.C.A.'s relationship to the churches has already been described. The Y.M.C.A. was never a joint agent of the churches, set up by official action of either local churches or national denominations. At the local, state, and national levels the Association was an independent organization that, by its own act, restricted its official control to members of evangelical Protestant churches, and sought to serve the interests of such churches and to facilitate their co-operation with one another. Before the days of federated agencies of the churches, it probably was interdenominational in more particulars than almost any other organization. In the earliest period, it was commonly referred to as a "union" movement among the churches. In recent years "union" and "interdenominational" have come to be applied to two further steps in the integration of the churches than that represented by the Y.M.C.A. The continued popular use of the term "interdenominational" with reference to the Y.M.C.A. probably, in some instances, is the result of lack of discrimination; but it may also result from the difficulty of finding another single word that quite adequately expresses the practical relation of the Association to the churches.

<sup>7</sup> See address, "The Pastor's Relation to the Young Men's Christian Association," by E. P. Wilde, on file in the National Council library, New York City.

no means all Associations conducted even one Bible class; and the number, size, and quality of religious meetings varied greatly from city to city.

The Reverend W. S. Marquis, of Rock Island, Illinois, in 1890 made inquiry by correspondence with a large number of Y.M.C.A. secretaries and with ministers in the same communities, which he reported at the Illinois State Convention of Y.M.C.A.'s.<sup>8</sup> He found that practically all the secretaries declared their purpose to help pastors in the following ways: in soul winning; in their shepherding or pastoral work; and in training their young men in the knowledge of the Word and in service to Christ.

The replies from pastors revealed a great difference of opinion as to the amount of help received from the Y.M.C.A.'s and as to what help was most valuable. Checking against the declared purposes of the Y.M.C.A. secretaries, the Reverend Marquis concluded that:

1. Not very many young men were being reached and saved by the Y.M.C.A.'s.
2. The type of Bible teaching done in the Associations was approved by the ministers.
3. Not many young laymen were being trained for work in the churches.

The general agreement among the ministers was found to be that the Y.M.C.A.'s were valuable in providing for young men wholesome leisure-time activities that involved the practice of Christian morals, gave valuable training for life, and brought young men within the influence of Christian men; and in providing practical counsel on Christian living in work and play.

While the concentration of the Associations upon work among young men removed one source of the anxiety on

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<sup>8</sup> See address, "The Pastor and the Young Men's Christian Association," by W. S. Marquis (1890), on file in the National Council library, New York City.

the part of the clergy, it was leading to developments within the Associations that were destined to arouse misgivings of another sort. In pursuing the spiritual, mental, social, and physical improvement of young men, the Associations were developing night schools, employment bureaus, social activities, gymnasiums, athletics, dormitories, and other things that appealed to young men—and also to boys. Such “secular” activities were less familiar to the clergy than the religious meetings and occasional Bible classes. Their contribution to church membership and to training for church work were less immediate. It was not long until apprehension began to be expressed lest the Associations were less interested in religion than they formerly had been.

### **Y.M.C.A. support of interchurch co-operation**

It is important to carry in mind the increasing co-operation among evangelical churches between 1851 and 1900, and the contribution the Y.M.C.A. had made to that co-operation. It is recorded that the Boston Association, in 1853, made arrangements to have the mail of all the clergy brought to its rooms at suitable hours and put into boxes, so that the ministers might meet one another as well as come in touch with the Association. There were no interdenominational ministerial associations then, nor for many years afterward. As time went on, the Associations themselves were an expression of the growing sense of unity among the churches, and their rooms became the headquarters for interchurch effort.

The initiative taken by the Associations in regard to union prayer meetings, during the Laymen's Revival of 1857 and 1858, marked a great advance. Their contribution in connection with the Christian Commission, during the Civil War, toward unity among the churches, among both the clergy and laymen, was very considerable. After the Civil War, it was frequently the Y.M.C.A.'s that took the initiative in bringing about union evangelistic cam-

paings. It is to be remembered that local churches seldom, if ever, in those days had any organization in common except the Y.M.C.A. Moody depended greatly upon the Y.M.C.A.'s where he conducted campaigns, and entrusted to them responsibility for much of the follow-up work. If he found the Y.M.C.A. weak, he took pains to get for it support in men and money before he left. Where there were no Y.M.C.A.'s, he sought to leave one organized as one of the fruits of his effort.

Following evangelistic campaigns conducted by others as well as by Moody, there was generally an effort to set up some permanent organization of the ministers. In this effort the Y.M.C.A. secretaries generally were active, and they themselves became members of these organizations. As a rule, the personal fellowship of the secretaries and the ministers was very close in the years of simpler ways, in both the Associations and the churches. Whenever an interchurch project was undertaken, the executive and administrative talents of the secretary were likely to be drafted, and the Y.M.C.A. rooms or building were generally the headquarters.

### **Railroad, Student, and Army and Navy Y.M.C.A.'s**

Three classes of young men, largely in segregated groups separated from normal community life, from their homes, and from church activities, had become the special concern of the Y.M.C.A.—namely, railroad men, college students, and men in the armed forces. In the work of its specialized organizations among these groups, the Y.M.C.A. was from the beginning accepted by the evangelical churches as the best available agency for such work. The Railroad Y.M.C.A.'s began to appear in the early 1870's, and by 1900 there were over a hundred and fifty of them. The first Student Y.M.C.A.'s had been organized at the University of Virginia and the University of Michigan before the Civil War, but the principal growth began in the early 1870's, and their great extension followed the

establishment of a Student Department of the International Committee<sup>9</sup> in 1877.

The establishment of this department was in response to the request of a large and influential delegation presented to the International Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1877. The delegation was composed of students, professors, and college presidents representing not only Student Y.M.C.A.'s but a large number of other student religious organizations, many of which antedated the earliest Student Y.M.C.A.'s. This delegation, after separate conference, was convinced that the time had come to create an intercollegiate Christian organization and that a department of the International Y.M.C.A. would best meet the need.

Not only were Associations organized rapidly thereafter in state and independent universities, but existing religious societies in church-related colleges quite generally changed over into Y.M.C.A.'s, or at least became affiliated with the state and international organizations of the Y.M.C.A.'s. Not until the beginning of the twentieth century did church leaders begin to question the adequacy of the Y.M.C.A. as the Protestant organization among men students.

During the Spanish-American War in 1898, the Y.M.C.A.'s conducted extensive service for the armed forces. In 1887, State Committees had begun to serve National Guard encampments and had developed a pattern of program that centered in "Y.M.C.A. tents." In this work they had enlisted the co-operation of the clergy. Immediately upon the outbreak of war, these State Committees began work for the regiments of their several states, but a national organization was clearly required. Three days after the President called for volunteers, the International Committee set up for this purpose a sub-

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<sup>9</sup> The International Committee was the ad interim executive body of the International Convention, with headquarters in New York City.

committee known as "The Army and Navy Christian Commission."

The Y.M.C.A.'s definitely felt that they were representing Protestantism in this service, although no formal arrangements with the denominations were undertaken. There were no federated organizations of the churches to act or to speak for them. Even the Home Missions Council did not come into being until ten years later. The urgency of immediate action was great, as it was later in World War I. That the churches expected the Y.M.C.A. thus to act on their behalf was evidenced by the support of both clergy and laymen in personal service and in financial support. The war was short, and the service fairly adequate. An outstanding feature was an aggressive evangelistic campaign with Dwight L. Moody as chairman. Eight thousand men in the different Gospel meetings openly took a stand for the Christian life.<sup>10</sup>

After the war, in response to the appeals of officers and men, Y.M.C.A.'s were established on many permanent Army posts and near Navy yards. In this undertaking, also, the International Committee understood that it was executing the wishes of the leaders of the churches, and their later co-operation confirmed that judgment.

### **The influence of Dwight L. Moody**

The early history of the Y.M.C.A.'s in the United States can hardly be understood fully without some knowledge of the influence of Dwight L. Moody. Moody began his leadership in the Chicago Y.M.C.A. during the revival of 1857-1858. He actively participated in the evangelistic work of the Christian Commission. As head of the Chicago Association, he was until 1870 its conspicuous delegate on the floor of the International Conventions, advocating the general evangelistic type of work. After that, he became

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<sup>10</sup> Morse, Richard C., *History of the North American Y.M.C.A.'s* (New York, Association Press, 1913), pp. 219 to 221.

wholly occupied in the work of an evangelist and ceased to attend the International Conventions until 1879. By that time Moody had become world-famous. In his travels he had encouraged and assisted in the formation and development of Y.M.C.A.'s on both sides of the Atlantic. The Convention unanimously elected him as its president.

Although Moody had by then come to the conclusion that Y.M.C.A.'s should specialize in the all-round development of young men, he continued to inspire the Movement with evangelistic zeal. It is said that he had inspired the spiritual life and activity of so many of the leading Y.M.C.A. secretaries of that period that his personal influence upon them was like that of a spiritual dynamo.

He was host to the first summer conference of Student Y.M.C.A.'s at Northfield, Massachusetts, in 1886, and continued to influence the student work to the end of his life. As previously stated, during the Spanish-American War (1898) he was chairman of Y.M.C.A.'s Evangelistic Committee. Moody frequently said of the Y.M.C.A.: "It has done more, under God, in developing me for Christian work than any other agency." His influence in the Y.M.C.A. Movement lived long after his death, but by the time of World War I most of the leaders who had come directly under his influence had passed from the scene, and the consciousness of his leadership was no longer strong.

### **The Y.M.C.A. and the Student Volunteer Movement**

One of the major contributions of the Y.M.C.A. to the churches has been through the Student Volunteer Movement, which was a direct outgrowth of the first student summer school at Mount Hermon, in 1886. Both the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. have co-operated most actively in this movement from the beginning. The first task assigned to John R. Mott, upon entering the service of the International Committee in 1888, was to conserve the Student Volunteer Movement, which, without leadership,



was breaking up. He perfected an organization under the joint auspices of the then existing three student movements: the Intercollegiate Y.M.C.A., the Student Y.W.C.A., and Interseminary Missionary Alliance. He then set up an Advisory Committee of leaders of the several Missionary Boards of the denominations. Mott continued as chairman of the Executive Committee for thirty-four years and has never ceased to be a dynamic influence in the Movement. It is impossible to measure or even to list the results of this movement in the missionaries it has inspired to volunteer, in the influence of its conventions, or in its impress in other ways upon the work of the churches at home and in mission lands.

As early as 1880, requests began to be received from foreign missionaries of the churches to send Y.M.C.A. secretaries to their fields. Student Y.M.C.A.'s began to be organized in mission schools and colleges as early as 1884. In 1888, the first secretaries were sent to Japan and India, and by 1895 representatives had been sent to South America and China.<sup>11</sup> This was done at the earnest solicitation of the missionaries of the leading evangelical churches. The men first sent out and those following them supplemented the work of the church missionaries by doing things and serving classes of people in regard to which the missionaries needed their help. These secretaries also worked for closer co-operation among the representatives of the various denominations.

### **The Y.M.C.A. an established institution**

The Young Men's Christian Association had become widely recognized by leaders of the churches as a part of the Church Universal. And what had the churches done for the Y.M.C.A.'s? What does an ally expect except recognition, appreciation, co-operation, and support? These, by and large, the churches, through their individual lay-

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196 and 262.

men and ministers, had given generously. In the later years of the period, the generosity of evangelical laymen in helping to provide buildings and equipment for the Y.M.C.A. was already extraordinary.

President W. H. P. Faunce of Brown University, in an address to the Semi-Centennial International Convention in 1901, said:

The history of the last fifty years is strewn with the wrecks of various religious and philanthropic organizations. Among those wrecks one institution still sails the seas, stronger than ever—the Young Men's Christian Association. What is the reason that while other organizations have disintegrated, dwindled and disappeared, this Association has waxed stronger and stronger? The answer will be found largely in its relation to the churches of Christ on earth. A man must give himself in unswerving loyalty to the visible church of Christ before he can attain a directing place or controlling voice in the counsels of this Association. . . . This requirement, which to those inexperienced in Christian labor, may seem superfluous and narrow, has held the Association for half a century steadfast to Christian purpose and Christian enthusiasm, and "wisdom has been justified of her children."<sup>12</sup>

This was the view undoubtedly generally held by leaders of both the Association and the evangelical churches. Many attributed the greater institutional progress made by the American Y.M.C.A.'s, as compared with those in Britain, to the difference in their relations to the churches. There was, however, a growing though not yet very vocal opinion, especially in New England, that progress in tolerance and understanding among churches had been sufficient in fifty years to make it advisable to broaden the Association's basis of active membership to include the members of other Protestant churches, in addition to the evangelical group. Indeed, to quote President Faunce again:

Let the Associations be as broad as the entire assembled

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<sup>12</sup> *Report of the Jubilee Convention* (New York, International Committee of Young Men's Christian Association, 1901).

churches of Jesus Christ. . . . Let them grow in horizon just as fast as the churches grow, and stand in the forefront of Christian thought as well as Christian action. Let them never represent simply certain sections of the true church of the Master.<sup>13</sup>

## Summary

During the first fifty years, the North American Y.M.C.A. had continuously asserted that it was a servant of the Protestant evangelical churches and had vested the control of its local, international, state, and training organizations in members of those churches. It had taken steps to insure against becoming another Church itself or assuming the distinctive functions of a Church. While safeguarding its own distinctively lay character and eschewing ecclesiastical control, the Association had honored and sought the counsel and co-operation of the clergy, though perhaps not as much as it should have done. It had provided facilities, fellowship, constructive activities, some religious education, and training in lay service for the young men (and for the boys) of the churches, supplementing what the churches were in a position themselves to provide. It had made it a major purpose to feed young men into the membership of the churches, but the results had often been disappointing. It had inaugurated an agency through which Protestantism extended its service to soldiers in the Civil War and had itself served as such an agency in the Spanish-American War. It had undertaken a comprehensive service to segregated groups of young men, including men of the regular Army and Navy, railroad men, and college students. It had developed still other special types of Associations among American Indians, rural youth, and Negro young men and boys, by which the interests of the churches were served in a unique manner.

There were other equally important, though less meas-

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

urable contributions, that the Y.M.C.A. had made to the Church. In the same address to the Jubilee Convention, President Faunce said:

The Association . . . has reacted on the churches in certain obvious and notable ways. It has to a remarkable degree developed the power of organization among the laity. . . . The Association also has enabled the churches to achieve and express a marvelous Christian unity. . . . It has brought about a more comprehensive idea of Christianity as applied to the entire life of modern man.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Francis E. Clark, father of Christian Endeavor, added:

Its special mission in the church is to set young men at work for young men. . . . A second special mission . . . is to put emphasis upon the symmetrical, well-rounded development of the whole man. . . . It has done more than almost any other organization to bring together the people of God in the different denominations.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

### CHAPTER III

## The Situation at the Turn of the Century

**B**Y THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY of the Y.M.C.A. Movement in North America, in 1901, the Associations were far advanced in their institutional development. All the larger and most of the smaller city Associations had buildings of their own. Most of these buildings were specially designed for Y.M.C.A. purposes. Many Associations had outgrown their first buildings and had secured new, larger, and more complicated ones. With these buildings had come the fuller development of the fourfold program for the spiritual, mental, social, and physical development of young men and boys. Boys' Departments were by then a definitely recognized part of the organization of Y.M.C.A.'s.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The author has not attempted to explore the relationships of the Associations and the churches around work with and for boys prior to 1900, but they must have been considerable. In a letter, E. M. Robinson, for many years senior boys' work secretary of the International Committee, points out that in the earliest Y.M.C.A.'s in America, boys—lads and youths of any age—were eligible to membership. Philadelphia, apparently, was the first Association to raise the "lower age limit" to fourteen years (1857). Sumner F. Dudley (who later founded Camp Dudley in New York State), at fourteen years of age, was an active member of the Worcester, Massachusetts, Y.M.C.A. in 1868 and working on a committee in charge of outpost prayer meetings. There was, from the earliest days, considerable work for boys who were considered "outside the membership." For instance, in 1854 the Alexandria, Virginia, Y.M.C.A. conducted a night school for working boys, and the Association in Charleston, South Carolina, reported a large industrial school for boys conducted in a separate building. The International Y.M.C.A. Conventions of 1854 and 1855 endorsed "work for boys," and by 1859 this work was growing to such proportions that the Convention of that year attempted to curb it, but without success.

## Changing character of the Y.M.C.A. membership and program

With the specially designed buildings and extensive activities there had come into "associate" membership large numbers of young men without church affiliation. There were likewise an increasing number of members of the non-evangelical Protestant churches on the one hand, and of the Roman Catholic<sup>2</sup> and Eastern Orthodox Churches on the other. Their presence began subtly to influence the program. The gymnasium drew a larger attendance than religious meetings. The distinction between "active" and "associate" members came to be so much ignored in such matters as committee appointments and in day-to-day activities that few remained aware of it. There was a pronounced tendency for the City and Railroad Associations to become institutions managed by mature boards and committees for the benefit of men and boys, instead of being an association of young men. The number of mature men participating in the activities was rapidly increasing. Few members any longer voted at elections of directors, and business meetings of members were becoming more and more difficult to assemble.

The largest Association of the time, Chicago Central, attempted to revive the sense of responsibility among "active" members by organizing an Active Members Club. This effort was a failure. In the larger Associations, the percentage of *members* who participated in the formal religious activities (Sunday meetings, Bible classes, personal workers bands) was declining, even though the total attendance at such activities was increasing. The gymnasium and educational-class enrollment tended to

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<sup>2</sup>A study of the Chicago Central Y.M.C.A. membership, made in 1900, revealed that 6.6 per cent were members of the Catholic Church. This was a larger number than for any of the Protestant denominations, but it equalled only one sixth of the total number of members of all Protestant churches. Only 44.3 per cent of the Y.M.C.A. membership were members of any church.

be a different clientele from that of the religious activities. The earlier types of evangelistic activities of the Associations outside their buildings had declined, and the newer type illustrated by shop meetings among industrial workers was still in the experimental stage.

Ministers and active laymen of the more evangelistic churches were beginning to say that the Associations were deliberately changing their character, whereas the attitude of ministers and lay leaders of the less evangelistic churches was different. More laymen from these latter churches were accepting places of responsibility in the Associations, and their ministers were inclined to look with favor upon the more scholarly type of Bible study that was rapidly increasing in the religious program of the Associations. The clergy of the liturgical churches were skeptical about the Y.M.C.A.'s undertaking to teach the Bible, since they conceived such teaching to be a distinctive function of the churches.

In their community activities, however, the Associations were holding or increasing the approval of most of the churches. Many churches appreciated the Associations' active co-operation in the joint evangelistic campaigns, that were so numerous in that period. Many evangelists of different types had sprung up in the wake of Dwight L. Moody. Most churches, other than the liturgical, appreciated the "normal" classes for teachers of the International Sunday School Lessons, which had become general in the Y.M.C.A.'s. Many churches approved of the broadening recreational policies of the Associations and of their expanding leisure-time programs outside, as well as inside, their buildings. Some very conservative churches, however, looked askance upon such "worldly" developments.

### **The Institutional Church Movement**

One of the factors that later led to considerable tension between certain churches and Y.M.C.A.'s was the considerable agitation about developing so-called "institu-

tional churches,"<sup>3</sup> with recreational and educational equipment and programs much like those developed by the Christian Associations. The hope was to hold the young people of the churches in closer contact with the churches, and to attract others as they had been attracted by the Associations. Many churches were not satisfied with the contribution of the Associations to their membership and to their working forces. Some were impressed with the inadequacy of the total service of the Associations, especially in larger cities, and felt that additional measures should be adopted to meet the need. This Institutional Church Movement, during its early phase of rapid growth, created much anxiety on the part of Y.M.C.A. leaders and actual tension between some Associations and churches.

### **The higher-criticism controversy**

The second factor was the growing controversy over "higher criticism" in the interpretation of the Bible. This controversy was to develop, two decades later, into the great Fundamentalist versus Modernist division among and within the churches. During the early years of this controversy, much of the Bible teaching in the Y.M.C.A.'s had been of the theologically conservative variety; but, beginning in the Student Associations, the fruits of critical study were used increasingly. Y.M.C.A.'s found themselves inevitably offending one or the other party to the controversy. In 1901 this dilemma was just beginning.

In the colleges of the country, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. with their offshoot, the Student Volunteer Movement, had become a great student Christian movement. The last of the local or denominational religious societies in church-related colleges were being changed over into Y.M.C.A.'s and Y.W.C.A.'s. The Protestant churches had come to depend upon the Christian Associations as the major means of serving the religious needs of students in

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<sup>3</sup> The Open and Institutional Church League was organized in 1894.



institutions of higher education. As has been already indicated, however, it was impossible to please all the churches all the time. The larger denominations, moreover, were becoming disturbed about the great number of their young people attending state universities. They felt that the Christian Associations were not expanding fast enough to serve adequately the rapidly growing student bodies, and that they did not sufficiently conserve and develop the church loyalties of those they did enroll. Some denominations were beginning to plan work of their own in state universities. This marked the beginning of a development that was to be a source of tension, and that was to call for almost continuous adjustments by the Christian Associations for a third of a century.

### **Unprecedented development of church lay activity**

During the early years of the twentieth century, there was an unusual development of lay activity among the men of the Protestant churches. One form that the movement took was the organization of brotherhoods, men's clubs, or men's organized Bible classes in local churches. These organizations generally had purposes similar to those of the Y.M.C.A.—at least supplementary and closely related. They sometimes proposed to do things for the men and boys of their churches that the Y.M.C.A. had been doing, but to do them for a larger number and under the auspices of the churches. Here was the possibility of duplication and competition. Many Y.M.C.A. leaders were worried.

The Laymen's Missionary Movement, projected in 1906 and actually inspired by the Student Volunteer Convention of that year, was another phase of this increased activity of laymen. A former Y.M.C.A. secretary, J. Campbell White, by his experimental work for one denomination, was largely responsible for the origin of the Movement and became its leader. Its Executive Secretary, W. B. Millar, also came from the ranks of the secretaryship,

as did several of its field representatives. John R. Mott and several prominent Y.M.C.A. lay leaders served on the Executive Committee. In the movement's series of annual campaigns across the country, the lay and secretarial leaders of the Y.M.C.A.'s almost universally carried heavy responsibility. The clergy were co-operative; but, especially during its earlier years, the movement was careful to maintain its lay character and leadership. Through this movement, the Association was brought into co-operative relationship with many Lutheran and some other churches, with which it had had little contact before.

Probably the happiest relations existed between the slowly increasing County Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches. A major method of the County Associations was active collaboration with the churches, with a view to strengthening the churches as institutions. Here was a new emphasis and a new method of the Associations, destined to have large influence upon relations with churches in many cities as well as in the country.

### **Summary**

As the Y.M.C.A. entered its second half-century, it is clear in retrospect that changes were taking place in both the Associations and the churches that created apprehension, produced tension, and necessitated readjustments. The first horseless carriages looked very much like other carriages, but the modern automobile bears little resemblance to its prototype. So Y.M.C.A.'s, in the early years, engaged chiefly in activities that were familiar to the clergy of the churches. The early Y.M.C.A. secretaries, however different they may have felt themselves to be, to others appeared very like ministers. But the city Y.M.C.A.'s of the early 1900's, with their commodious, specially designed buildings, their fourfold programs, their "businessman" general secretaries, and their physical directors, educational directors, employment directors, and other specialists in "secular" activities, represented such a rapid metamor-

phosis that readjustments in relations with old friends were inevitable.

The theological controversy developing in the churches, the Institutional Church Movement, the Laymen's Missionary Movement, the development of denominational work in universities, and the launching of denominational men's movements such as the St. Andrew's Brotherhood of the Protestant Episcopal Churches were developments on the part of the churches that necessitated adjustments by the Associations. The consequent tensions were still chiefly between local Y.M.C.A.'s and local churches; but the increasing aggressiveness of the International Committee, with its growing staff, its promotional policy, and its Association Press, and the beginnings in the churches of national lay organizations and national programs for the state universities were making it necessary for the denominations and the International Committee to come to terms with each other. At the same time, these new developments were recognized by the farsighted in both the Associations and churches as providing new opportunities for co-operation, locally and nationally, in achieving their common objectives.

## CHAPTER IV

# Developments in the Early Twentieth Century

**I**N 1906, RICHARD C. MORSE FOUND it desirable as general secretary of the International Committee to issue a published statement in support of the contention that, throughout their history, the Y.M.C.A.'s had both maintained their control in the hands of members of the Protestant evangelical churches and, in their service, had been "loyal to their *pastors* and their churches."<sup>1</sup>

He pointed out the advantages that had come to the Associations through their evangelical church-membership basis of control and declared that, in spite of the expansion of their service among non-evangelical Protestants and among Roman Catholics, and in spite of the demands in some quarters for a conservative change in the membership basis, "the Associations will consistently insist on conserving as indissoluble the tie which binds the organization loyally to the church evangelical."

### The Laymen's Brotherhood Movement

Possibly having in mind current anxiety about the effect of the growing Laymen's Brotherhood Movement in the churches, Mr. Morse cited the concern that had been felt in the 1880's and 1890's lest the Young People's Movement in the churches supplant the Christian Associations; and he called attention to the fact that, although the Young People's Societies enrolled twenty times the membership

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<sup>1</sup> See Morse, Richard C., *Relations to the Churches* (New York, International Committee of Y.M.C.A.'s, 1906).

of the Y.M.C.A.'s, the Associations had expanded to ever greater size and usefulness, in accord with their own peculiar genius.

Association leaders were quite generally aware that a changed situation had arisen calling for Movement-wide thinking. The Employed Officers' Association appointed a Commission on the Relation of Young Men and Boys of the Churches, under the chairmanship of Robert E. Lewis of Cleveland, which reported at the conference in Omaha, in 1909.<sup>2</sup> This Commission found that "practically all of the denominations now have separate organizations for men, with special secretaries in the field, and many of these denominational organizations have Junior Chapters."<sup>3</sup> The Commission pointed out that:

. . . the Y.M.C.A. and the Brotherhoods of the churches are simply two different forms of expression of the same great idea and purpose, viz.—work by Christian laymen in behalf of men and boys. But there is a fundamental difference between the two organizations, which arises from their different relations to the church. The Brotherhoods being integral parts of the congregational and denominational organization are peculiarly able to develop those activities within the churches that will meet many needs of men and boys and lead them into church membership and service, and also to express the sentiment and wield the influence of the church on social questions and in public affairs. The peculiar relation of the Y.M.C.A. to the churches gives it their confidence and support, but leaves to it freedom of initiative and that absence of ecclesiastical affiliations that is necessary in order to serve and receive the support of the whole community in the conduct of institutional activities and in dealing successfully with classes as yet prejudiced against the organized church.

While having distinctive functions that justify the co-existence and strengthening of both, their main objective is so nearly the same and their work interlaces at so many points

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<sup>2</sup> Membership of the Commission: Robert E. Lewis, chairman; R. B. Adams; H. W. Arnold; C. S. Bishop; Ralph W. Cooke; W. I. McNair; and S. Wirt Wiley.

<sup>3</sup> See *Report of Commission on the Relation of the Association to Young Men and Boys of the Churches* (June 1 to 6, 1909).

that some definite basis of co-operation is necessary to prevent wasteful duplication and to secure the greatest effectiveness of both.<sup>4</sup>

It was recommended that such a basis of co-operation should be arrived at co-operatively by the two movements, the Associations seeking to serve and strengthen the brotherhoods at both local and national levels. Local inter-denominational federations of brotherhoods were to be encouraged, and a permanent Conference of North American Brotherhoods was suggested. Conference between such a body and the Associations was envisioned at state and national levels. In all these developments, it was asserted that "the Association should continually re-adjust its own activities so as to continue to be a supplemental agency to the church."<sup>5</sup>

The Commission's correspondence had discovered that: . . . the laymen of at least thirty cities had formed federations, many of them without definite plans or cohesion. . . . In thirteen cities the Association as an organization holds an advisory relation to the laymen's federation. In eleven cities an Association employed officer is secretary of the federation.<sup>6</sup>

The Laymen's Brotherhood Movement continued to grow for a number of years, but never attained the significance that was anticipated by this commission. It was a World War I casualty and never recovered its former vigor, although the post-war experience of different communities and of different denominations varied greatly.

### **The Men and Religion Forward Movement**

A major episode of this Laymen's Brotherhood Movement, however, was the Men and Religion Forward Movement, launched in 1911, which was a united effort of ten denominational brotherhoods, the International Sunday School Association, the Gideons, and the International

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s.<sup>7</sup> It was largely inspired and led by Y.M.C.A. leaders, with Fred B. Smith, then executive secretary of the Religious Work Department of the International Committee, as the central figure. This movement assumed extensive proportions and was significant largely in arousing the interest of churchmen in social service and in community welfare. With this movement, local Y.M.C.A.'s co-operated almost universally with enthusiasm. Local brotherhoods and federations of brotherhoods were stimulated, and the relations between them and the Associations became approximately those recommended by the Commission of the Employed Officers' Association in 1909.

### **Y.M.C.A. program assists the Sunday Schools and attracts non-churchgoers**

This same Commission had discovered widespread service by the Associations to the churches through assistance to their Sunday Schools. At this period, the Bible-study program of the Associations was at its height. In addition to the normal classes for teachers of the International Sunday School lessons, the Associations were conducting classes and lecture courses for more specialized training of teachers of boys and young men's classes in the Sunday Schools, and in enlisting teachers who had had experience in Y.M.C.A. Bible classes. Teacher-training libraries were provided. Religious censuses were conducted. Sunday School enrollment campaigns were carried on. Encouragement and assistance were given regarding decision meetings for adolescent classes. The organizing and pro-

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<sup>7</sup>Organizations participating in the Men and Religion Forward Movement included the Baptist Brotherhood, Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip, Brotherhood of the Disciples of Christ, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Congregational Brotherhood of America, Gideons (Commercial Travelers), International Sunday School Association, International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s, Lutheran Brotherhood, Methodist Brotherhood, Otterbein Brotherhood (United Brethen), Presbyterian Brotherhood of America, and United Presbyterian Brotherhood.

moting of Sunday School athletic leagues was common. This latter development was giving the churches a throughout-the-week activity to hold the interest of youth.

The Commission found that Associations were relating non-churchgoing men to churches by means of shop meetings, men's Bible classes, meetings in home and in churches, neighborhood clubs for men and boys that met in churches, and similar activities in which the Associations took the initiative and provided competent supervision.

### **Institutional churches and "Y's" co-operate**

The anticipated competition between Y.M.C.A.'s and so-called "institutional churches" never developed extensively. It was reported in 1906 that in New York City the investment in the institutional equipment of churches and missions totaled six million dollars, while the investment in Y.M.C.A. facilities was only two and a half millions. In many other cities, churches were experimenting. Experience with problems of maintenance, supervision and the administration of activities was generally disillusioning. The building of institutional churches never ceased. But gradually sentiment turned in favor of utilizing the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., so that between 1905 and 1920 the Y.M.C.A.'s enjoyed an unprecedented building era. The Associations very generally assisted the churches that acquired recreational facilities by giving them expert counsel, and by helping them secure leaders and supervisors. In some cities, the Associations eventually undertook the management of such church facilities and used them for the benefit of the rest of the community, as well as for the immediate constituencies of the churches. This often proved to be a very happy arrangement for all concerned.

### **Tension over student work**

During the period from 1900 to 1910, the Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist (North), Methodist (North), Lutheran, Episcopal, and Disciples Churches established



special work for students and employed student pastors in from one to seven state universities each. Between 1910 and 1920, all these denominations made provision for student work in their national organization and greatly increased their appropriations to church work in individual universities. Interchurch co-operation on campuses developed; local University Pastors' Associations came into being; and, in 1907, a National Conference of Church Workers in State Universities was established. In 1912, the Council of Church Boards of Education was organized, whose major concern was this church work in non-church educational institutions.

This development meant that the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. were no longer the exclusive dependence of the churches in the student field. Church work on campuses tended to follow the pattern established by the Christian Associations. Naturally, considerable tension developed. The Christian Associations did not surrender their unique position willingly. Some church leaders, on the other hand, asserted that the church enterprises would eventually supersede the Christian Associations. Wiser heads set about definitely to find common ground for co-operation, both locally and nationally.

While the Christian Associations came to recognize the propriety of the churches following their young people into the universities through special pastors, in addition to the work of local churches, they nevertheless asserted the right and duty of the Associations to act as the interdenominational co-ordinating agency and as the agents of all religious forces in managing all-campus enterprises, such as evangelistic campaigns. Some Associations were slow to invite the student pastors and the most interested local pastors into responsible participation in the planning as well as the conduct of such campus-wide enterprises. The difficulty was increased by the difference in the policies and practices of different denominations. Individual student pastors complained, and the Conference of Church

Workers in State Universities became quite critical of the Student Department of the Y.M.C.A. This attitude was transmitted to the Council of Church Boards of Education when it was formed in 1912.

It is important to remember that this area of tension was confined at that time to a relatively few state universities, and that in very few of those were more than two or three denominations maintaining student pastors. Some denominational boards were encouraging annual religious campaigns in their own colleges; and wherever the Christian Associations existed in such colleges, they were utilized as the promoting organizations. This was indicative of the general good will that undoubtedly existed.

The tension over the situation in state universities was of unusual importance because it immediately took on national significance. Denominational organizations with their student pastors were not simply local projects. They were almost always inaugurated by a synodical or the national organization of a Church and largely supported by denominational funds. Pastors were appointed to carry out denominational policies. Tensions between local student pastors and Y.M.C.A.'s became the concern of national church boards; and when the Council of Church Boards of Education was formed, the channel was provided whereby a group of denominations could unitedly deal with the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s. This actually occurred. The successive stages of conference and adjustment will be traced in later chapters.

## **The Federation Movement**

Another development during the early years of the twentieth century, which was destined profoundly to affect Y.M.C.A.-Church relationships, was the Federation Movement. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, there had been an increasing number of independent interdenominational organizations—that is, societies made up of individual members from all the evangelical church-

es—but none were federations of the denominations themselves.<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of the Evangelical Alliance, organized in 1846, had been to provide a means of common action in some particulars for the denominations; but it was not a representative federated body. The Alliance was succeeded in 1900 by the National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers, whose membership consisted of individuals and a few congregations. It worked definitely toward a formal federation.

In 1905, this Federation of Churches and Christian Workers brought together a conference of officially appointed representatives of practically the same list of denominations that now compose the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, for the avowed purpose of considering federation. After much speech making, practically all of it in favor of church co-operation and some sort of permanent organization for the purpose, a representative committee was appointed to bring in a plan three years later. In 1908, the meeting for organization was held. The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America was created, and the great majority of the denominations participating in the 1905 conference became members. The character of the organization was essentially the same as it is at present.

The churches now had a representative organization that they controlled, through which they could express their united opinions and act unitedly in such matters as they might decide. The decisions of the Council had to

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<sup>8</sup> The major interdenominational organizations of the non-ecclesiastical variety and the dates of their founding were: American Tract Society, 1813; American Bible Society, 1816; American Sunday School Union, 1824; American Society for the Promotion of Temperance, 1826; American Anti-slavery Society, 1833; Evangelical Alliance, 1846; Y.M.C.A., 1851, (in America); Y.W.C.A., 1866; International Sunday School Association, 1872; Young Peoples Society of Christian Endeavor, 1881; Student Volunteer Movement, 1886; Open and Institutional Church League, 1894; and National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers, 1900.

be confirmed by the official bodies of the individual denominations before they became binding. No longer were the churches dependent nationally for united action upon independent organizations that, on their own initiative, undertook to serve the interests of the churches but that were not subject to the direct control of official church bodies. The Federal Council, the Foreign Missions Conference of North America (1893), and the Home Missions Council (1908) brought a new meaning to the word "interdenominational."

The reality of the spirit of unity was demonstrated, however, by the good will and practical co-operation that was maintained from the beginning between these new federated agencies and the older organizations. As the Employed Officers' Commission (Y.M.C.A.) observed in 1909:

The possibilities of aggressive work through direct federation of denominational agencies are rapidly increasing. This is highly desirable. The progress will certainly modify, more or less, the peculiar functions of the Associations; and the Associations should therefore place themselves in such relations of co-operation with all such federated movements as to be able constantly to adjust themselves to the changing conditions and to insure the most effective coordination of all Christian agencies.

The Federal Council did not arise out of a movement toward federation in local communities. In 1908, there were only four local federations (Portland, Maine, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Greater New York) and one state federation (Massachusetts). The Council undertook the promotion of local and state federations; but because of lack of funds, after the first two years it was not able to accomplish a great deal until after World War I. The relation of local federations or councils of churches to the Y.M.C.A. is an interesting story that will be discussed in a later chapter.

## Summary

There is danger that the discussion of tensions and strains, and of adjustments and readjustments, may have given a distorted impression of the relationships of the Y.M.C.A. and the churches during the early part of the present century. In reality, however—as revealed by the Employed Officers' Commission survey, made in 1909—the tensions and strains were only incidental to a great volume of co-operation, steadily expanding in scope and significance. Indeed, the distinctive characteristics of this period were the Y.M.C.A.'s efforts to strengthen the activities of the churches among their own men and boys, and its active co-operation with the interchurch lay movements of the time.

The outstanding impression of the period is that all the misunderstandings and conflicts that seemed possible at the turn of the century or later had been resolved into co-operation or were in the process of being so resolved by the end of the first decade. The situation had become so complicated, however, as to call for a fresh and comprehensive statement of policy by the International Convention of the Y.M.C.A.'s.

## CHAPTER V

# Y.M.C.A. Policy Clarified (1910 to 1917)

**T**HE NEXT INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF Y.M.C.A.'s was to meet in 1913. In preparation, it was found desirable to appoint a Commission on the Relation of the Y.M.C.A. to the Church to:

... carefully reconsider the relation of the Y.M.C.A. to the Church in its different aspects, with the hope of presenting to the forthcoming Convention at Cincinnati recommendations which may clearly define the place, the policy and the program of the Association, in relation to the Church.

This Commission was composed mainly of Y.M.C.A. lay and secretarial leaders.<sup>1</sup> Its chairman, Frank K. Sanders, D.D., was president of Washburn College, a church college.

### The Cincinnati Declaration

At the Convention, held in Cincinnati in 1913, one of the most important declarations of policy ever made by the Association on this subject was adopted and issued. It consists of eighteen resolutions dealing with the relations of the Association to the Church. The first paragraph expresses tersely and clearly the spirit of the whole document:

The most important agency for the promotion of religious life is the Church. No other institution should be permitted to supplant it or to ignore its primacy. The Association reaffirms its historic policy of absolute loyalty to the Church,

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the Commission: Frank K. Sanders, chairman; S. Wirt Wiley, secretary; Edward P. Bailey; Clarence A. Barbour; Charles W. Bishop; S. W. McGill; John S. Nollen; Richard R. Perkins; Karl A. Shumaker; Charles Stuart; and A. G. Studer.

and reasserts its intention to recognize in all its activities the preeminence of the Church, the extension of whose influence is the primary purpose of the Association.<sup>2</sup>

The succeeding paragraphs of the Cincinnati Declaration deal with the successive aspects of that relationship which is the subject of the whole document. The Association emphasizes its sense of responsibility for the promotion of work among men and boys in respect to their physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual welfare; but it insists that its supreme aim is, in this way, to help in building up the kingdom of Christ by leading boys and men to become disciples of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, by leading them into membership of the organized churches, and by helping them to develop their Christian character. The pursuit of this great aim involves the maintenance of a real independence of management and, at the same time, the maintenance of its fundamental principle that all who are responsible for the direction of its work shall be those who have "personally accepted Christ as their Savior" and who are members of an evangelical church.

The Association recognizes the necessity for co-operation with all organizations that are reputable and that are working for the good of men and boys. This co-operation must, of course, include especially the pursuit of a closer relationship with the organized churches. When conflict of interests arises, the Association desires to take the initiative in seeking "a friendly adjustment." It expresses its consciousness of being providentially created and used as "a pioneering agency, as an experimental center, as a religious laboratory," on behalf of the Church, in relation to the manifold interests of men and boys. It recognizes that there are certain fields or groups of men and boys which the Church, under its present system of work, does not reach directly. To these, the Association must address

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<sup>2</sup>*Proceedings of the Thirty-eighth International Convention* (New York, International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s, 1913).

itself. Not only in the home, but in the foreign field, the Association feels a deep responsibility for making every effort to reach men and boys; and everywhere it desires to work with the church agencies already operating throughout the world.

A special paragraph deals with the important subject of the work the Association desires to do in close co-operation with the churches in the great state universities of this country. Likewise it feels its responsibility, arising from its particular experience and from the very nature of its field of operations, for aiding the Church in raising up successive generations of Christian leaders. This includes a sincere and earnest endeavor to secure an increasing number of strong men for the Christian ministry.

The Association further affirms that its particular spiritual task includes that of educational evangelism, especially among boys and younger men, and affirms afresh its devotion to that supreme task. In a very impressive paragraph, the Association further insists that its one supreme purpose of winning young men to Jesus must be felt personally and pursued earnestly by every member of the Association, both its employed secretaries and active members.

The action of the International Convention in adopting this report was highly encouraging to the church leaders. The Reverend Willard L. Sperry, pastor of Central Congregational Church, in Boston, when serving as chairman of a commission appointed by the Massachusetts-Rhode Island State Committee in 1915, wrote:

The past history of religion as it has come up to just such critical hours before, in the relation of the Church to the school, the hospital, the Associated Charities, would seem to suggest that in all probability the Association would break away from direct relation to the Church and go its own independent way, perhaps as an entirely new form of institutional religion, a modern brotherhood movement organized to meet the all-around needs of modern men.

In recent years it has certainly been at least a possibility



that the Association should break loose from the organized Church and launch out upon an independent life of its own. Its threefold program might well offer the basis for a new and more comprehensive creed, and its secretarial force has already become, unconsciously, a new type of clergy. The Association has developed its own forms of religious instruction and its own types of religious service. All that was needed, apparently, to give the Association formal liberty was some act of its own, some declaration of independence which should launch it out on its way as a free agent in the wider world.

This declaration, however, has not been made. On the contrary, the Association, within the last few years, has reaffirmed its loyalty to the Church and defined itself as an expression of the life and services of the churches. . . . In the whole history of the vexed relations between the Church and the movements it has begotten and developed, there are few passages as significant as the resolutions adopted at the International Convention of the Association held in Cincinnati in 1913.<sup>3</sup>

### Cleveland Conference on work in universities

In 1914, the necessity had become apparent for an official conference of the responsible leaders of the student work of the two Christian Associations and of the churches. Accordingly there was arranged, under the leadership of a committee composed of a representative from each group, a conference of the Council of Church Boards of Education (twelve delegates), the Conference of Church Workers in State Universities (twelve delegates), the Young Women's Christian Association (ten delegates), and the Young Men's Christian Association (fourteen delegates), to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, on March 19, 1915.

The following questions, prepared and revised by the Committee on Arrangements, were read by the chairman and adopted as the agenda for discussion:

1. Is the unification of Christian forces in state universities desirable?

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<sup>3</sup> *Report of a Commission Appointed by the Young Men's Christian Associations of Massachusetts and Rhode Island to Inquire into the Present Occupation of the Association Field and into Their Co-operation with the Church* (1915).

2. With unity as a goal, how can it be best accomplished?
3. How, in the judgment of the church agencies present, may the Christian Associations promote the religious welfare of state university students?
4. Is the attitude of the Associations, locally and nationally, favorable to the approach of the Church and church workers?
5. Discussion of the University of Pennsylvania plan and of other plans.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Mott promptly moved an affirmative answer to the first question, and his motion was unanimously adopted.

In discussing the second and third questions, there came to the floor the issue as to whether the Y.M.C.A. should plan its campus-wide enterprises without taking the student pastors into the planning process. Some of the student pastors contended that a federation would be desirable, rather than an "independent organization not directly responsible to the co-operating forces." The Christian Association leaders emphasized the importance of student initiative and control that gave more drive in execution, as well as more latitude in planning. This has been a recurring issue, not only in the student and city fields, but in Y.M.C.A. war work and wherever the Association has assumed to act on behalf of the churches. The problem has been how to conserve the flexibility, initiative, and broad possibilities of co-operation among individual Christians from many different churches that have been provided by a lay organization and, at the same time, maintain co-ordination and co-operation with the ecclesiastical bodies and their clergy in such a way as to strengthen the churches as institutions.

Discussing the fourth question, Dr. Mott declared:

On behalf of the Student Committee of the International Committee and on behalf of all my associates I wish to say that we are unqualifiedly in favor of the approach of the Christian Church—through the Church Workers Association.

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<sup>4</sup> See *Summary of the Cleveland Conference, March 19, 1915*, on file in the National Council library, New York City.

As to the different policies of church approach followed by the different members of the Church Workers Association, there would be a difference of opinion among our workers as there is a difference among yourselves. You do not want us to decide this.<sup>5</sup>

In the course of the day's conference, a Committee on Findings brought in a six-paragraph report that was approved. These agreements laid the foundation for good understanding and co-operation, locally and nationally, between the Associations and the denominations in their work in universities. The Committee on Findings was continued for the ensuing year as a Committee of Reference, to study the various problems involved and to call another conference.

The Committee of Reference set up the following three commissions: Commission on an Adequate Religious Program for State Universities, Commission on Evangelism, and Commission on Religious Education in Tax-supported Schools and Schools of Like Character. Each commission held several meetings during the following year and a half, and on November 23, 1916, a second conference was called at Cleveland to hear their reports.

At that meeting there were present eleven representatives of the Council of Church Boards of Education, thirteen of the Conference of Church Workers in State Universities, fifteen of the Y.W.C.A., and sixteen of the Y.M.C.A. Fourteen of the twenty-four representatives of the churches and fifteen of the thirty-one representatives of the Christian Associations had attended the first conference. Dr. John R. Mott and Miss Mable Cratty again led the Association delegations.

### Findings of the Second Cleveland Conference

The three commissions presented their reports. The following excerpts from the reports of the Commission on

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Adequate Program,<sup>6</sup> as adopted by the Conference, are quoted at length because they laid the foundation of a growing understanding and co-operation that was to continue to the present:

The Commission believes the following to be the purpose of our common enterprise:

1. To lead every man and woman in a university community into faith in God through Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Savior.

2. To unite them in membership and service in the Christian Church.

3. To promote their growth in Christian faith and character.

4. To prepare them for world-wide service in the kingdom of God.<sup>7</sup>

The Commission believes that the number of activities at present promoted in state universities is, as a rule, sufficient. The surveys of the local situations, however, lead to the conviction that sufficient attention has not been given to the size of the task to be performed. Considerable groups of students are largely unreached, and present plans do not give promise of remedying the situation. Therefore, it seems essential that all of the religious forces now operating should be so correlated and unified as to put into effect a program that shall bring home to every student the complete message of Christianity. This result can never be achieved by the mere federation of small plans which already may be in existence, as for example, by bringing both Association and church Bible groups under some common direction, but it calls for a comprehensive and thorough survey of the whole field, together with the training of a sufficient leadership from both graduate and undergraduate sources to meet the total need discovered, and then such a division of labor as to make it certain that each line of activity shall be well understood and vigorously pressed.

In view of the situation as outlined, the Commission presents the following principles which it believes to be essential to an adequate religious program for state universities:

1. We recognize the university as a community with a uni-

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<sup>6</sup> *Summary of the Second Cleveland Conference, November 23, 1916.*

<sup>7</sup> This is substantially the Student Y.M.C.A.'s statement of purpose, in general use since 1907.

fied community life; and, therefore, that our task is not only the development of individual Christians, but also the creation and maintenance of a university community consciousness favorable to the Christian life.

2. We recognize the opportunity and the responsibility of the Church to co-operate with the university in the development of this moral and religious life.

3. We recognize that while students are members of a university community, they should be kept loyal to the church of their preference; and, therefore, we urge the identification of each student with a local church, and we further urge the faithful performance of all the duties of membership in that church.

4. We recognize that in order to reach the entire university and especially the non-Christians and indifferent Christians, and in order to co-operate more effectively with those Christian communions not included in the organized local work among students, it is essential that the denominations work together through some interdenominational movement. In the light of history and experience it is recognized that the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations constitute this interdenominational movement.

5. We recognize the religious work in the university as the common task of the churches and the Associations, but there is no clear division of interests. We recommend, therefore, that while some functions may be more particularly those of the churches and others of the Associations, each should feel its responsibility for co-operation in the work of the others.

6. We recognize that in carrying out this common task for the entire university the best results can never be secured by a federation of individual plans worked out independently by the respective church and Association agencies. We recommend, therefore, that a united and thorough study be made of the needs of the entire university and that in any particular activity, Bible study or social service for example, the Christian forces work out together a unified program, planned with reference to the entire university.

7. We recognize in the organization both of the churches' and Associations' work that student initiative and control, both in forming and in carrying out plans, should be encouraged and utilized.

8. We recognize that neither the Associations nor the churches can render their full service without effective workers. We, therefore, recommend that there be frank consulta-

tion between these agencies to ensure that the local student forces are distributed for the most effective manning of all work.

9. We recognize that the Associations shall have the right of initiative, and that they shall be held responsible for carrying out the joint plans of the churches as far as practicable; but they should be so constituted that the churches co-operate in forming their policies.

10. We recognize that there must be the fullest opportunity for the expression of initiative by the churches; but that in all such plans the ultimate test should be not only its effectiveness to the individual churches, but also its relation to and its effect upon the co-operative plans.

11. We recognize that there can be no assurance of effective co-operation without regular, thorough, and timely consultation upon the part of all the Christian workers concerned.

12. We recommend that any agency initiating religious work at the university make special effort to secure the support and co-operation of all agencies concerned with the religious life of the university.

13. We recognize the very great importance of using as secretaries and pastors, and as members of advisory and consulting boards, only such men and women as have both the willingness and the ability to work co-operatively.

14. We recognize that in enterprises which concern both the churches and the Associations effective co-operation can be obtained only when each organization is willing to favor movements of obvious good to the whole, even though unable for any reason to give the same individual support.

15. We recognize that co-operation in each local field will be greatly increased if the traveling secretaries or other officers of the various national organizations endeavor to meet with all local Christian workers in the state universities they visit whenever such conference can be made conducive to the spirit of general co-operation or whenever such a visit is aimed to change or extend plans in which all are concerned. Such a meeting should give opportunity for frank and full discussion in open conference of whatever plans and suggestions they may have in mind.

16. We recognize as supplementary to the co-ordination of the agencies at the university center the great advantage which would accrue from consultation and conference between representatives of the national student and church agencies regarding the work that is being planned for university centers.

Student pastors continued to press for some kind of councils on local campuses in which the Christian Associations would be members along with the several church organizations, councils in the control of which each would have a proportionate part. On the whole, however, there appears to have been general and hearty concurrence in these wise and farsighted agreements, the purport of which was to lift Church-Association relationships out of the realm of organizational frictions and into the realm of co-operative planning and action, to the end that an adequate Christian impact might be made upon the campuses of the United States.

The Commission on Evangelism outlined specific plans for co-operation that were approved by the Conference; but because of insufficient agreement regarding plans for courses in religious education in tax-supported schools, no resolutions were adopted on the basis of the findings of the Commission on Religious Education.

### **Relations with interdenominational agencies**

Relationships with official interdenominational agencies of the Churches were increasing more rapidly even than relations with individual denominations. In the First Cleveland Conference, in 1915, Dr. Mott called attention to the fact that the Y.M.C.A. was then dealing with at least nine other interdenominational church organizations—namely: the Committee of Reference and Counsel, representing the Foreign Mission Boards of the United States and Canada; the Home Missions Council; the Women's Home Boards; the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations; the Council of Church Boards of Education; the Board of Missionary Preparation; the Social Service Commission of the Federal Council of Churches; and the Committee on the Home Base.

The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America represented the plenary bodies of the member denominations that controlled the functional boards that were fed-

erated in the other councils. In theory and increasingly in practice, it was the most comprehensively representative body of the Churches. The relationship of the Y.M.C.A. with the Federal Council was to become of great importance.

Prior to World War I, the Federal Council undertook tasks in which the denominations recognized that collaboration was most needed and most readily achieved—for example, social service (dealing with the conflict of capital and labor, arbitration, and so on), evangelism, week-day religious education, country life, and other matters. The Council followed an opportunistic policy, adding functions as circumstances demanded, or at least gave opportunity to carry out aims outlined when it was organized.<sup>8</sup> “It was one thing to speak on a Convention platform for co-operation and federation; to support them when denominational plans and budgets were being made was quite another.”<sup>9</sup> The Federal Council never had an operating budget of more than eighty-five thousand dollars before World War I, and only a small proportion of that came from the denominations *per se*. It was not yet an important factor in the Association’s relations with the churches.

The Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. had not been included in the membership of the Federal Council of Churches. Apparently neither the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.’s nor the organizers of the Federal Council sought such a relationship. Neither were other independent interdenominational organizations included, not even official interdenominational bodies like the Foreign Missions Conference and the Home Missions Council. The general secretary of the Federal Council early reported to that body, however, that cordial relations have been established with both the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. The

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<sup>8</sup> See Macfarland, Charles S., *Twenty Years of Federation* (New York, Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, 1928), pp. 28 to 37.

<sup>9</sup> Hutchinson, John A., *We Are Not Divided* (New York, Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, 1941), p. 59.



International Convention of the Y.M.C.A.'s in 1913 adopted a resolution of cordial co-operation, and relations have been cordial and co-operative to the present day.

It was logical that the independent interdenominational organizations should not be members of a council that was to consist exclusively of the denominations. It seems appropriate, however, at this point to call attention to some implications for the Y.M.C.A.:

1. A situation was created that was fraught with the possibility of misunderstanding and tension between the new Federal Council and the International Committee in those areas in which the latter had, in practice, served the churches. It is only necessary to refer, by way of illustration, to the leadership of the Y.M.C.A. in national evangelistic campaigns in the colleges, to its service in the Spanish-American War, and to the active part taken by it in the Laymen's Missionary Movement and the Men and Religion Forward Movement. Difficulty was avoided by conference and adjustment, largely through the device of the Federal Council's appointing on many of its committees secretaries of the International Committee, not as official representatives of the Y.M.C.A., but as denominational representatives who were related to policy formation in the Y.M.C.A.

2. The omission of the independent interdenominational organizations left the Federal Council without the ability, actually or potentially, to represent the whole of Protestantism.

3. The relationship of the Christian Associations within Protestantism was left undefined by the churches at a time when a major move toward unification was undertaken. This not only failed to draw the Associations into closer and more definite relations to the Protestant churches, but it left the way open for the Associations themselves, without agreement with the churches or their Federal Council, to modify those relationships and, what is more sig-

nificant, to develop relationships with non-Protestant churches—namely, the several branches of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

The existence and activity of the official interdenominational bodies previously enumerated, of the several older independent bodies and of a number of denominational bodies operating in somewhat the same fields but not federated, clearly called for some clarification of relationships, and some accepted basis of understanding and co-operation.

A conference of interdenominational, "non-denominational," and related denominational organizations was held in St. Louis, Missouri, December 5 and 6, 1916, convened by the Federal Council's Commission on Federated Movements at the suggestion of various participating organizations.<sup>10</sup> Ninety delegates were enrolled, representing the following bodies:

1. Interdenominational: Council of Women for Home Missions, Home Missions Council, Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations, United Society of Christian Endeavor, and Missionary Education Movement.

2. "Non-denominational": American Sunday School Union, International Committee of Y.M.C.A.'s, International Sunday School Association, Laymen's Missionary Movement, and National Board of the Y.W.C.A.'s.

3. Denominational: Baptist Young People's Union, Brotherhood of Andrew and Phillip, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Disciples of Christ, Epworth League, Organized Adult Bible Class and Brotherhood Departments of the Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Protestant Episcopal, Presbyterian U.S.A., and United Brethren and United Presbyterian Churches.

This was the first time a formal attempt had been made to classify the independent organizations as "non-denominational." Only a month earlier the Conference on Stu-

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<sup>10</sup> See Macfarland, Charles S., *The Churches of Christ in Council* (New York, Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, 1917), pp. 284 to 292.

dent Work at Cleveland. made up of representatives of the denominations and of one of the federated councils. as well as representatives of the Christian Associations, had continued to apply the term "interdenominational" to the Christian Associations. Even in the Conference here under consideration the term "non-denominational" appears not to have proved generally acceptable, and it has never come into general use. It has not seemed quite adequate for organizations like the Y.M.C.A., of which Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick has recently said: "It is already an interdenominational community in a time when a divided church is trying to get together."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, there continues to be a need for a term or terms that will accurately distinguish between the two types of interdenominational agencies: those that are independent of ecclesiastical control and those that are federations of Churches or of their functional boards.

The Conference at St. Louis was presided over by Fred B. Smith. The agenda consisted chiefly of presentations of their fields of work by the several societies, followed by discussion. At the end, the Conference resolved: "Never before were so great and promising the desire for and degree of co-operation among related groups of religious agencies." But it was also resolved that: "It is further the opinion of this conference that there is no sufficient occasion for the formation of an official federation of the agencies represented in this conference." The Conference suggested the publication and distribution of the following statement by Dr. John R. Mott:

#### PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE IN THE CO-OPERATIVE RELATIONS OF CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS

1. To recognize the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To honor the independence, individuality and autonomy of the Christian agencies concerned.

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<sup>11</sup> *Centennial Tributes to the Y.M.C.A.* (New York, Association Press, 1944), p. 13.

3. Each of the agencies concerned should have a clearly defined field and functions, as defined by itself.

4. Where one agency is occupying and cultivating a given field and gives promise of doing so with increasing acceptance, no other agency should undertake to occupy the field or to parallel the existing organization or its activities.

5. In determining the sphere in which there should be co-operation between two or more agencies, due regard should be paid:

- a. To the meeting of some admitted need or a real crisis.
- b. To attaining an object that is well worth while.
- c. To obviating regrettable waste.
- d. To the accomplishment of results that cannot be secured as well if at all by these agencies working separately.

6. Among independent Christian organizations the inviting of co-operation or the accepting of invitations to co-operation must be purely voluntary, as contrasted with having some outside body attempt to enforce such co-operation.

7. To simplify the machinery of co-operation to its lowest terms.

8. Recognize that the desired co-operation involves an identification of interests; regular, thorough, and timely consultation on the part of the leaders of the organizations concerned; mutual consent as to such policies and methods as are of common concern; and wholehearted endeavor to carry out the plans upon which there has been agreement.

9. Let the leaders be on their guard with reference to the things in their own lives which injure co-operation and which make impossible real spiritual unity—for example, ignorance and prejudices, hazy thinking and vague statement, jealousy, selfish ambition, distrust, lack of frankness, and other sins of the tongue, political scheming or finesse, disloyalty.<sup>12</sup>

Whether this statement of principles has been kept before the leaders of the several organizations may be doubted; but insofar as they have been observed, they have been found to be a sound basis for creative co-operation.

### **Relations with non-Protestant Churches**

Reference has been made to the possibility of relationships with the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. At the American Jubilee Convention of

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<sup>12</sup> Macfarland, Charles S., *op. cit.*

the Y.M.C.A.'s in Boston, in 1901, Father Vassilief, a priest of the Greek Church in Russia, himself an active member of the St. Petersburg Y.M.C.A., had been present as a delegate from the Association and had taken part in the sessions of the Convention.<sup>13</sup> In 1916, liberty was granted to extend the work of the Y.M.C.A. to all the cities of Russia, by imperial authority. Beginning in 1910, the Y.M.C.A. in Constantinople had been establishing relations with the Orthodox Churches of the Near East. In the United States, increasing immigration from Orthodox countries was accompanied by increasing numbers of members of the Orthodox Churches in the membership of the Associations. This was especially true of young Greeks who found in the Y.M.C.A. an opportunity to satisfy their athletic interests. With the Orthodox Churches as such in America, however, there appears to have been little contact up to this time.

The number of Roman Catholics in the membership of the American Associations had continued to grow, until not a few Associations—particularly in industrial communities—found that their Catholic membership equaled or exceeded the membership of any one Protestant denomination. Many Catholic laymen made generous contributions to Y.M.C.A. building funds during this period, and many were rendering useful volunteer service as committeemen and in other ways.

Catholic priests, however, as a rule, were still uncooperative and disapproved of their members belonging to the Y.M.C.A. There were notable exceptions. Archbishop Ireland had made a substantial contribution to the building fund of the St. Paul, Minnesota, Association. Many priests among the recent immigrants, who had been assisted by the Y.M.C.A. at Ellis Island and who had known

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<sup>13</sup> See *Report of the Jubilee Convention* (New York, International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1901), p. 325. Also Morse, Richard C., *My Life with Young Men* (New York, Association Press, 1918), p. 478.

its service to their parishioners, were personally very grateful and co-operative.

Edward F. Garesché, S.J., a Catholic priest and editor of *The Queen's Work*, St. Louis, Missouri, made an extensive study in 1915 of "Catholics in the Y.M.C.A." He published his findings and resulting opinions in eleven articles in *The Queen's Work*, and reprinted them in a series of three pamphlets.<sup>14</sup> His conclusions were as follows:

1. At least one hundred and fifty thousand of the six hundred and twenty-five thousand members of the Y.M.C.A. (United States and Canada) at that time were Catholics.<sup>15</sup>

2. Catholics could not vote, hold office, or be employed as "Y" secretaries.

3. To Catholic members of the Y.M.C.A., the deprivation of active membership seemed to bring very little actual disadvantage.

4. Publications and leading secretaries of the Y.M.C.A. asserted that it was distinctly a Protestant organization.

5. The Detroit Convention action of 1868 and the Portland Convention definition of "evangelical," in 1869, ignored the claims of the Catholic Church to the name Christian.

6. The Y.M.C.A. was not directly a proselytizing organization.

7. Y.M.C.A.'s promoted "indifferentism" among its Catholic members. The Association's attitude that one church is as good as another denied the claims of the Catholic Church. The good service of the Y.M.C.A., the sincere concern of its secretaries for the welfare of all its members, the character and rectitude of Protestant friends made at the Y.M.C.A., diminished that keen loyalty of the Catholic Church which looks upon any compromise of

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<sup>14</sup> Copies on file in the National Council library, New York City.

<sup>15</sup> The Y.M.C.A. has no comprehensive statistics for that period against which to check this estimate, but it seems to the author to be too high for that date.

Catholic doctrine as treason and any minimizing of the authority of the Church as sin.

8. The Y.M.C.A., by gathering in so many of the flower of Catholic young men, was to that extent keeping them away from the influence of their priests and of Catholic organizations.

9. The physical recreation and educational work of the Y.M.C.A. were the factors that attracted its members—advantages that Catholic youth needed and that the Church was not supplying adequately.

10. The Catholic Church should develop on a national scale a Catholic Young Men's Association, with buildings, facilities, and programs equal to those of the Y.M.C.A., and with a specially trained secretariat equal to that of the Y.M.C.A.

11. The Catholic Young Men's Association should have lay management of its business, money raising, and finances; of the erection, equipment, and management of its buildings; and of the material side of the enterprise in general. Every center should have a priest as chaplain. The whole enterprise should be under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities.

12. Leading secretaries, of whom L. Wilbur Messer was accepted by Father Garesché as the spokesman, believed that the Catholics should have their own Y.M.C.A. and had offered help to that end.

It is interesting to note that as Father Garesché's investigation progressed through several months and the successive installments of his report were published, his critical attitude toward the Y.M.C.A. softened and his appreciation increased. The report was widely circulated among Catholics, for whom it was written. How great was its influence, it is impossible to measure.

The opinions and attitudes attributed to L. Wilbur Messer, who was general secretary of the Chicago Y.M.C.A., probably were fairly characteristic of the leadership of the

Associations in that period. The big fact was, however, that as Protestant and Catholic laymen by the thousands mingled in the fellowship and service of the Y.M.C.A., Protestants as well as Catholics were acquiring increased respect for the genuineness of the other's Christianity.

### **Controversy over the membership basis reopened**

Discussion of the desirability of broadening the basis of voting membership increased, even though the old basis was reaffirmed in 1913. The Student Associations especially were restless about this matter, even though they had been permitted in 1907 the option of applying a "personal" test of eligibility. There was a growing demand for some substitute for the Association's definition of "evangelical," adopted in 1869, and there was increasing disapproval of the Association's assuming to classify the churches on theological grounds. On this matter of membership basis, there was made evident in convention debate, not only the difference between the members of different denominations and between theological conservatives and liberals within the Associations' "active" membership, but a marked difference between different sections of the country. In the South, for example, where theological thought was generally conservative and where there were few non-evangelical churches and Catholics were not numerous, the disposition was to retain both the evangelical basis and the definition of "evangelical." In New England, on the other hand, where theological thought was generally liberal and where non-evangelical churches were strong and Roman Catholics were increasing rapidly, there was strong sentiment for a change.

### **Increasing co-operation with Protestant churches**

Local Y.M.C.A.'s tended to take on the coloration of the dominant Protestant churches of their communities, so that local relationships were not directly affected by these debates in International Conventions; but the attitude of



very conservative denominations on the one hand, and of very liberal denominations on the other, toward the International Committee, which necessarily had to pursue a somewhat middle course, tended to be critical. Nevertheless, during the years just preceding America's entrance into World War I there was a steady increase of good understanding and co-operation between Y.M.C.A.'s of all the different types and the Protestant churches, both at the local and the national levels. The problems, with a few exceptions, were in the main the problems of working out better arrangements for collaboration toward mutual aims. Relations with the non-evangelical churches were improving in many local communities, and actual co-operation was not uncommon.

One of the most significant instances of co-operation of the period occurred in relation to China. Richard C. Morse thus described it:

In 1907 at Shanghai, 1,000 missionaries out of the 4,000 at work in China, representing over 50 different Christian denominations, met to celebrate the centenary of Christian missions in that vast domain. The student class is the leading class of greatest influence in China. Those thousand missionaries, from all the churches, asked the Young Men's Christian Association to take the leadership in bringing the Gospel message to this student, leading class among the millions of that land. . . .

In January 1912 . . . at the annual Conference of Mission Boards of the United States and Canada . . . [it was] recommended that the Boards . . . allocate for five years twenty men with wide experience and knowledge of the language and of student life, coupled with evangelistic gifts, to work in conjunction with an equal number of Association specialists to be sent out by the International Committee. . . .<sup>16</sup>

This co-operative arrangement was in highly fruitful operation when the United States was drawn into the war.

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<sup>16</sup> Morse, Richard C., *History of the North American Y.M.C.A.'s* (New York, Association Press, 1913), pp. 135 and 271-272.

### **Influence of Dr. John R. Mott**

In 1910, Dr. John R. Mott, head of the Foreign Work of the North American Y.M.C.A., had been elected president of the World's Missionary Conference, which met in Edinburgh, Scotland. The Continuation Committee named by the Conference chose Dr. Mott as its chairman; and when, through the committee's work, the International Missionary Council was brought into being ten years later, Dr. Mott served as its president for more than twenty years. He is now honorary chairman. In this relationship he has rendered to the Protestant Churches of the world and to the cause of unity among the Churches a most extraordinary service.

Dr. Mott became general secretary of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s in 1915. In that capacity, during the following thirteen years he exercised his great influence to promote greater co-operation between the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches. He consistently advocated the largest possible co-operation with the widest feasible circle of churches, both in America and around the world. The opportunity to bring to bear his immense experience came after the war, when, in 1926, he was elected president of the World's Alliance of the Y.M.C.A., a position he still holds.

### **Summary**

As we attempt to summarize the course that relations between the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches had taken between 1900 and World War I, it is important to remember that it had been a period of tremendous expansion and development by all types of Y.M.C.A.'s. The number of local Associations had increased by only a little over 40 per cent; but the number of members had more than doubled, to a total of nearly three quarters of a million. The value of buildings and permanent funds had been multiplied by more than four, and totaled about ninety-three million dollars. The number of secretaries had in-

creased more than two and a half times, to over four thousand; and the number of laymen on boards and committees had increased to ninety thousand. Total operating expenses, which reflected the volume of activities and services, had increased from three million to twenty million dollars annually. All this in seventeen years!

The greatest relative growth had been in the foreign (missionary) work of the American Y.M.C.A.'s. In 1917, there were nearly two hundred secretaries in foreign service. The national and state organization of the Associations (to promote and supervise work in America) had also grown, diversified, and specialized, until over three hundred secretaries were employed in such service.

Certain natural consequences followed from such expansion and the evidence of public favor that was involved. One was a sense of confidence in the future of the Associations, courage to undertake big things. Another was great absorption in the development and management of their own affairs. A third consequence, which involved the relations with the churches, was greater difficulty with the problem of maintaining the traditions and former relationships of the Associations, owing to the rapid increase of leadership personnel, both volunteer and professional.

It is significant, therefore, that during this period the increasing points of contact between the Associations and the churches so generally became points of co-operation, as the activities of both became more diversified and specialized. Helpful relations to the "institutional" activities of churches were developed, rather than competition. Y.M.C.A. resources of lay and professional leadership were put at the service of the new lay organizations in local churches and of their local federations. Collaboration in the two great national laymen's movements of the period was not only willing but sometimes aggressive. The International Committee took a very active part in the Foreign Missions Conference, of which it was a regular member, and received the active co-operation of the member

boards, notably in work among Chinese students. Cordial and mutually helpful relations developed with the new Federal Council of Churches and with the Home Missions Council. Toward the close of the period, the conference with five official and four other independent interdenominational agencies, together with five denominational brotherhoods and ten denominational young people's movements, had resulted in good understanding and the formulation of principles to guide their relations in the path of co-operation. Through extended conference, the basis of co-operation between the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A. and the student work of the leading denominations had been worked out and stated in much detail. It is perhaps most significant that these developments were all in accord with or were the fruits of recommendations of a commission of the Employed Officers' Association (1909) and another of the International Committee, which resulted in a comprehensive statement of policy by the International Convention of Y.M.C.A.'s (1913).

The Y.M.C.A. as a rule accepted the responsibility of taking the initiative in working out adjustments to new and changing circumstances, but it was met by cordial response on the part of the church leadership. The great expansion in the resources and work of the Y.M.C.A. itself was in large measure due to the active support of both church laymen and clergy. It was a part of the strategy of the short-term building campaigns of the Associations to secure both the endorsement and active support of the ministers of the Protestant churches.

There had been noted in this period also the beginning of relations, in the foreign outreach of the American Associations, with branches of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the emergence of the question as to future relations of Roman Catholic laymen within the Y.M.C.A. and of the attitude of the Catholic Churches toward the Associations. These matters will assume increasing importance in later chapters.

## CHAPTER VI

# Y.M.C.A.-Church Relations in World War I

**I**N WORLD WAR I, LONG BEFORE the United States became a belligerent, under the leadership of Dr. John R. Mott the Y.M.C.A.'s of this country had made possible a service to the prisoners of war on both sides of the conflict that was eventually to affect more than six million men behind barbed wire. On the day that the United States declared war, the services of the Y.M.C.A. to the men in military service were offered to the President, who accepted them soon afterward.

A widely representative National War Work Council was appointed by the International Committee, and General Secretary Mott served as its chief executive. The war work consisted of four main sections: with the armed forces in America, with the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) in France and Great Britain, with the armies of the Allies, and with prisoners of war.

In this country, the Y.M.C.A. carried on its work inside the training camps—not outside, as in the present war. It rendered most of the service now provided by the Special Service Officers in the Army and the Welfare Officers in the Navy, in addition to its own distinctive activities. For this service the Y.M.C.A. erected, equipped, and operated nine hundred and fifty-two specially designed buildings and about two hundred and fifty other units. Special services were also provided on eight thousand troop trains and eleven hundred ships.

With the A.E.F. overseas, the Y.M.C.A. operated almost

two thousand centers. At the request of the Army, it also managed an extensive chain of canteens that did a non-profit business of over forty million dollars and operated leave centers at many resorts. In its program, the Y.M.C.A. carried out the implications of its famous emblem, the red triangle, and attempted to provide for the physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the men in the varying circumstances of war.

A grand total of 25,926 war workers served under the American Y.M.C.A.—20,781 men and 5,145 women. Less than a thousand of these were experienced Y.M.C.A. secretaries; the rest were recruited from other occupations, selected out of two hundred thousand applicants. About thirteen thousand served in this country, nearly eleven and half thousand with the A.E.F., and fifteen hundred with Allied armies and war prisoners. The task of recruiting, training, and deploying this great number of people was necessary under war conditions to maintain a maximum working force of about seven thousand men at any one time.

In three campaigns, the American people contributed to the War Work Council more than a hundred and sixty-seven million dollars—a sum larger than the total investment in Y.M.C.A. buildings and funds throughout the world at that time!<sup>1</sup>

The war work of the Y.M.C.A., in 1917 to 1919, raised a number of issues in Y.M.C.A.-Church relations—some new, but mostly old—that led to the appointment of a commission of churchmen which reviewed the whole range of these relations in peace and in war, and reported to the International Convention of 1919 in one of the most valuable documents ever produced on this subject.

The membership of prominent clergymen was conspicu-

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<sup>1</sup> See Harris, Frederick, editor, *Service with Fighting Men* (New York, Association Press, 1922), Vol. II, pp. 527 and 531.

ous on this Commission on the Relation of the Y.M.C.A. to the Churches. The chairman was Dr. W. Douglas Mackenzie, president of Hartford Theological Seminary; and the vice-chairman was Dr. W. P. Merrill of New York. There were also a number of conspicuous laymen and half a dozen Y.M.C.A. secretaries in the total membership of twenty-five.<sup>2</sup>

Since the problem of Y.M.C.A.-Church relations recurred in somewhat acute form in connection with the war work of the Y.M.C.A. in World War II (to be considered in a later chapter), that section of the Commission's report dealing with wartime relations is of special interest. The statement is comprehensive but concise.

### General appraisal of Y.M.C.A. war work<sup>3</sup>

The entrance of the United States into the war and the religious and moral needs which at once emerged showed what an indispensable and effective agency for service the churches possessed in the Young Men's Christian Association. Without it they would have had no instrumentality for offering a united and adequate social and religious ministry adapted to the unprecedented necessities of the hour. The Association, with the specialized experience, organization, equipment and resources which the churches possessed in it, was ready at once in their name to offer to the Government a ministry whose absence, as we now look back, would have been an immeasurable calamity. It was a courageous offer. The magni-

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<sup>2</sup> Membership of the Commission; President W. Douglas Mackenzie, D.D., chairman; Reverend William P. Merrill, D.D., vice-chairman; F. W. Ayer; John Willis Baer; President Clarence A. Barbour, D.D.; Edward H. Bonsall; Dean O. E. Brown, D.D.; Philo C. Dix; Frank DuMoulin; Eugene C. Foster; F. A. Henry; George C. Hubert; V. H. Lane; A. H. Lichty; L. Wilbur Messer; E. Y. Mullins; Bishop Thomas Nicholson; Reverend George C. Pidgeon, D.D.; Reverend Robert E. Speer, D.D.; Reverend Ernest M. Stires, D.D.; W. C. Stoevers; Reverend John Timothy Stone, D.D.; Reverend James I. Vance, D.D.; Reverend H. L. Willett, D.D.; and E. Graham Wilson.

<sup>3</sup> The following pages are quoted from *Study of Church Relations*, report of the Commission on the Relation of the Y.M.C.A. to the Churches (1919).

tude and the difficulty of what was involved no one realized. As Bishop Brent<sup>4</sup> writes:

"The service rendered by the Y.M.C.A. in the Army and Navy was one of the most daring adventures that any society ever undertook. The exact degree of success it would be difficult to state, but this at least can be said, that conditions being what they were, the work in the A.E.F.—which is the only section that I was personally acquainted with—was indispensable."

Barring the canteen and the amusements, the work in the United States was an even greater work, and it was equally indispensable. We are not speaking of the whole work in itself, but are dealing with its relation to the problem of our Commission; and we have no hesitation in saying that the Young Men's Christian Association revealed a right conception of its mission as an agency of the Church in offering itself for the war service, and that the churches at once heartily took this view. The Federal Council of the Churches, in special session at Washington, May 8 and 9, 1917, declared:

"The churches should cordially sustain and reinforce the work of the Young Men's Christian Association, which is an especially equipped and well-tried arm of the Church for ministering to men in the Camp."

And the General War Time Commission of the Churches said:

"The General War Time Commission of the Churches recognizes with grateful appreciation the varied, extensive, and indispensable service which is being rendered to the American soldiers and sailors at home and overseas by those trusted auxiliary agencies of our churches, the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association."

### **The matter of the Y.M.C.A.'s representing Protestant churches**

At the same time we must recognize that grave questions have been raised both as to the method and the principle of procedure. Quotations from some of our most trusted and responsible church leaders will disclose these questions. Some

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<sup>4</sup> Bishop Charles H. Brent of the Protestant Episcopal Church was chaplain general of the A.E.F.



believe the Association should not have acted in the large capacity it did without a mandate from the churches, accompanied by either partial or complete ecclesiastical control.

One expresses his objection in this way:

"By the edict of the Government the Y.M.C.A. assumed full responsibility for all religious work among the soldiers as representing Protestants. Protestant preachers have had to work on both sides of the sea under the direction of the Y.M.C.A., and the same conditions continue at the present time. Protestants are therefore made responsible by the Government and the Y.M.C.A. for all the work done under the direction of the Y.M.C.A. It is a case of forced responsibility with no authority to control."

And some leaders felt and still feel that the acceptance by the Association of a government commission which at first was construed by some, both within and without the Association, as taking cognizance only or chiefly of the Association as a welfare agency; the appeal for funds and for popular support on welfare grounds, to the obscuring of the religious character and purpose of the organization; the effort to avoid criticism against religious propaganda; the feeling of responsibility which with some developed into the danger of monopoly and exclusion; the peril of being regarded by the government and the public as a non-church institution and, at the same time, both avowing to the churches its fidelity to its traditional character and professing to serve as their sole representative with the chaplains in the camps—that these and many other elements in the situation put a great strain upon the relations of the Association to the churches.

Again citations may be extensively made showing the existence of powerful oppositions to the work of the Association on the grounds of its religious activities and evangelism. The following sentences are taken from an article published in *The Home Sector* (successor to *The Stars and Stripes*) in the issue of September 27, 1919:

"It soon became apparent that the Y.M.C.A., while consenting reluctantly to administer the canteen, was also hotly determined to preach to the boys. Reports from the camps both here and overseas told of prayer meetings camouflaged as movie shows, of antediluvian tracts circulated, of resistance to Sunday baseball, of reluctance to allow smoking in the rooms, of reading rooms inundated with proselytizing church magazines, well calculated to enrage such Catholics, Christian

Scientists and other unrepresented persuasions as might well chance on them. . . . The Y.M.C.A. activities created the impression abroad and at home that the Association work was a zealous but misplaced religious propaganda. . . . The Y.M.C.A.'s own literature can be quoted liberally to sustain the argument that it was primarily a religious approach to the Army. . . . Speaking as the supervisor of all welfare work it is his [the supervisor's] opinion that in future such work should be cleansed of all sectarianism, for just as the men in the Argonne did not fight as Protestants, Free Thinkers, Jews or Catholics, so there is no earthly or heavenly reason why they should have been in any way distinguished in their leisure hours."

### **Concrete issues of relationship**

But beyond the general question of the service rendered by the Association as an agency of the Church in entering the war work as it did and the problems involved therein, we need to face some of the definite and concrete issues of relationship between the Association and the churches which developed.

The first of these had to do with the relation of the Association secretaries to the chaplains. This question antedated the war, but the war accentuated it. A sensible and acceptable working agreement was reached at the time of the meeting of the Federal Council in Washington, in July, 1917. The rush and change of war conditions, however, carried this problem through various alterations, which need not be detailed here. The situation in France and in the United States also differed greatly. Probably the chaplains held different judgments on the subject, but this letter from one of the ablest and most successful of them states what is perhaps their general view with regard to the camps in the United States:

"I was not sent to camp until November, 1918, and was the first chaplain, I believe, to be definitely assigned to the camp. The Y.M.C.A. had been well established from the beginning of the camp, with five buildings, a camp religious director and a religious secretary for each building. Orders were placed in my hands giving me full authority over religious work at the camp, so that there was abundant opportunity for difficulty, but I found the 'Y' men so broad-minded and generous in spirit that the work continued in perfect harmony. Certainly the chaplains were dependent upon the Y.M.C.A. for facilities, which were generously extended, and I believe the testimonies

of the 'Y' men to the helpfulness of the chaplains were entirely sincere. I felt that it would have been better if a chaplain had been established in each 'Y' building as religious work director at the start, with adequate office, etc., and with the senior chaplain as the sole religious director of the camp, but the Army had no chaplains available for the purpose and it was altogether to the credit of the Y.M.C.A. that they organized the work as they did."

The problems of the Association in this country in doing its work and in fulfilling its trust from the churches were made immensely more difficult at the beginning, and indeed almost to the end of the war, by the fact that there were no chaplains in the camps and that there was a shameful shortage in France until after the Armistice. This meant either that the sacraments and worship and pastoral ministry of the Church would not be given at all, or that the Association's ordained secretaries must provide them, or that the churches must devise some other method. The solution adopted by the churches was the institution of voluntary chaplains as camp pastors. A host of problems arose in consequence which were not settled when the war ended. Some of these workers of the churches in the camps speak with unalloyed satisfaction of their relations. Dr. Manning,<sup>5</sup> of Trinity Church in New York City, writes:

"I served as voluntary chaplain at Camp Upton from December, 1917, until November, 1918, for several months of this time as chaplain of the 302nd Engineers and for the remainder of the time as chaplain of the 6th Battalion, 152nd Depot Brigade.

"In the course of this work, I was thrown into daily contact with the secretaries and representatives of the Y.M.C.A. and worked in closest association with them. My relations with the representatives of the Y.M.C.A. were in every way most satisfactory; and I was constantly impressed by the ability, resourcefulness, and devotion of these workers, and by the fine spirit in which they did their work in the camp. During my whole time in the camp this judgment was strengthened and confirmed. In my opinion it would be difficult to overstate the magnitude of the service to the nation and to the men in the Army and Navy which the Y.M.C.A. rendered.

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<sup>5</sup> The Right Reverend William T. Manning, since 1921 Bishop of New York, of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

"As acting chaplain of a regiment, my work was quite independent of the Y.M.C.A., and I feel therefore that I can give my testimony the more freely."

But some of the churches feel that the Association was opposed to this whole institution of the voluntary chaplains or camp pastors; that it disapproved of the effort of the churches to share thus in the work in the camps; and that nevertheless those workers were indispensable to represent the Church's ideals and ministry as such, to provide the sacraments and doctrinal teaching and pastoral care of the young men from the churches, and to maintain home contacts. Some of the churches also felt the desire for a distinctly denominational ministry, which the War Department disapproved.

The camp secretariat provided in itself a body of relations with the churches which was most intimate, vital and helpful, but which also brought its problems. 1,538 of the 10,290 secretaries in the home camps and 1,448 of the 11,691 secretaries who went overseas were ordained men. Of the 1,777 religious work secretaries in the United States 986 were ordained men, and of 256 special religious workers who went overseas 220 were ordained. The figures of the much larger number assigned by the Paris office to religious work are not available. These workers were themselves living bonds between the Association work and the denomination and local churches from which they came. To the extent that any of them felt hampered in their religious service or compromised in their ministerial character by reason of the semi-lay work they were doing, questions arose in part relating only to the transient condition of the war, but in part penetrating to the problem this Commission is considering.

The relation of camp Association buildings to the Church and to the churches brought the question of broad relationships to view. Some, both within and without, were desirous of discovering a way in which the service and houses of the Association would be as distinctly avowed as the contribution of the Protestant churches as the Knights of Columbus' service was avowed as the contribution of the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand there was questioning at first in some places as to the extent to which the sacraments might be given in Association huts. Good sense and equity generally prevailed, and save in exceptional situations the local service of the Association huts and the general religious work of the

Association in the camps both illustrated and strengthened the right relationship of the Association and the churches.

The method of handling the War Roll was carefully arranged after conference with the denominational war commissions, so as to relate the men as closely and directly as possible to the home churches and to the central denominational commission also, where the latter was willing. And the great part, indeed almost all, of the evangelistic work, so constant, so skillful in the main, and so fruitful, which was done here and abroad was done by the ministers of the churches serving as secretaries or as special speakers, or working with the Association as voluntary chaplains and camp pastors. In the time of demobilization the Association has had a notable opportunity to serve the churches. One Association alone had 6,568 religious interviews with soldiers or sailors returning from service, and 4,348 men were referred to churches.

Nothing revealed more clearly the deepest feelings of the churches toward the Association than their attitude to the criticisms brought back by the soldiers from France. The churches at once appraised this criticism. They recognized and acknowledged the truth where it was proven, and they know that such failure to render a perfect service as appeared was inevitable. They believed and they believe that no other agency in the war, not even the Government itself, reached any higher percentage of success. The attacks upon the Association drew to it many who felt that these attacks represented injustice if not some secret machination, and that they were directed not at the Association only but at its ideal and supporters.

This loyal and unyielding support of the churches makes it all the more an obligation to face squarely their questionings about some of the methods and courses of the Association in the war work which they fear may represent continuing tendencies, and which may imperil the confidence and support of the churches and the true service of the Association.

The inclusion of the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association in the United War Work Campaign in November, 1918, called forth criticism from some of the Protestant churches and from many supporters of the Association's work. We need not enter into the argument which led the Government and many other interests to insist upon this combination. It is enough to recall that the Association believed that a different plan would have

been wiser and more effective; that the plan adopted did not merge the budgets or the administration of the agencies combined in the campaign for the solicitation of funds alone; that the President distinctly recognized in his letter the autonomy and distinctiveness of the various organizations; and that the Protestant churches accepted the situation and heartily supported the campaign as urged by the action of the General War Time Commission of the Churches in Washington on September 24, 1918.

### **Some definite suggestions**

The war not only brought into view many new aspects of the problem and new grounds of assurance that it will be solved; it also provided some definite suggestions:

1. There is need of proper relationship between the Association and the churches at the top, where the general policies and programs are framed. The ends in view may be accomplished:

- a. By miracle—i.e., by the infallible action of the Association acting alone and securing results.
- b. By conferences between the churches and the Association through the International Committee or through the International Convention.
- c. By some device of Advisory Committee or representative relationship.

The problem arose at the outset of the war work. The War Work Council was at first organized almost wholly of laymen chosen by the International Committee, and its Executive Committee was confined to laymen. This was unlike the Christian Commission, which the Young Men's Christian Association had initiated for the work of the Civil War. That Commission of twelve members contained four clergymen, and one of the five members of its Executive Committee was a clergyman. It became necessary, accordingly, to provide in some other way for securing the counsel and advice of the clergy of the churches, and a Co-operating Committee of the Churches was established. This was established, not by the churches, however, but by the Association. Still it served a very useful purpose, and indeed for a short time it had to fill the place of the Religious Work Bureau. By means of it and

the membership of representatives of the Association on the Executive Committee of the General War Time Commission of the Churches, the acute problems of the war time were dealt with, and a situation was worked through whose delicacy and difficulty are known to but few. It would be well for any who are disposed to deal lightly with our present problems if they could be made aware of the inner history of those months. The central fact is that personal friendships and voluntary arrangements had to bear the burden of the heaviest task we have ever met in the matter of the relations of the Association and the Church. Such burdens should be borne upon proper organic and administrative settlements. Has the war experience suggested what these might be?

2. There is need not only of a more efficient relationship of the Association to the churches at the top. The same need extends throughout. . . . Cannot some better way be devised of making statements of policy and relationship, which have been authoritatively adopted actually effective? This was a real issue in the war. . . .

Democracy must be conserved, but in some way also the absolute integrity and veracity of the Movement must be assured. And on the side of the churches there is the same problem and the same necessity.

3. There are many who think that one of the chief lessons of the war with regard to this problem of relationship was taught by the publicity work and its effects. They believe that this work was more responsible than anything else for misunderstanding of the real character and relation of the Association, and for dissatisfaction and complaint among the churches. They say that the utterances of the publicity agencies of the Association in the war overpraised and exalted the Association; depreciated the work of the churches either by silence or by implication or by direct statement; and disavowed the repeated official declaration of the Association with regard to its religious and evangelical character and its relation to the churches.

The work of professional publicity no doubt created much prejudice and restiveness among the church supporters of the Association. . . . The Publicity Departments, national and local, should be required to set the Christian Church first and the Association second in their representations; to exalt the Church and the Association only as the agent of the Church; to advertise, not foolishly, but humbly and regularly what the

International Conventions have repeatedly declared to be the fundamental character and relationship of the Association. . . .<sup>6</sup>

4. The true power of the Association in the war lay in its unselfish Christlike service. Its huts in the camps were homes to the men, and its secretaries were brothers. "The best work of the Y.M.C.A.," says one of its most competent observers, "was due to its readiness to serve simply and humbly wherever there was a human need." Service as a surreptitious cloak to evangelism is not effective and it is not Christian. The war experience was not needed to show that such service rendered only with an ulterior purpose is not Christian, but it was valuable as showing how effectually such service frustrates itself. It will help both the churches and the Association in their work and relations to remember this. Loyalty to its fundamental religious character does not forbid but compels the largest measure of pure unselfish and brotherly helpfulness and good-fellowship.

5. Lastly the war experience taught that the religious problem of the Association, or the fulfillment of its religious responsibility to the Church, is its easiest problem, not its most difficult. It has its difficulties. A policy that would commend the Association to one body might be deemed unsatisfactory by another. But what will commend it to all is the policy of striving to bring men ever and always to Christ and to His Church, and of actually setting the relationships of men to the organized Church, with its worship and sacraments and service, first in the work and purpose of the Association.

### **Some observations after twenty-five years**

Whatever change in the appraisal made by this Commission might seem desirable in the perspective of twenty-five years later, its report was certainly a faithful record by a group of eminent churchmen of what had occurred and of the attitudes that had been assumed. These men,

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<sup>6</sup> The writer recognizes this statement as representing faithfully the position of many members of the clergy and of some laymen. As director of the Publicity Bureau of the War Work Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s during the first year of World War I, he recognizes that attention is here called to a very common fault of Y.M.C.A.'s. But after more than thirty-five years under responsibility for the publicity policies of local Y.M.C.A.'s or of the National Council, he feels compelled to express doubt as to the practicability or desirability of the Commission's proposal, literally applied in its extreme implications to Publicity Departments.



both by their opportunities to observe and by the fresh inquiry they had made, seem to have been competent to report. It is true that the Commission had been appointed by the International Committee. That fact, plus the fact that the Y.M.C.A. was still undergoing much popular criticism of its war work overseas, might have influenced these men to be a little overgenerous in their appraisal of the value of the service to the armed forces; but these factors could hardly have influenced their interpretation of the relations between the Association and the Protestant churches. The whole report, but especially the "definite suggestions" in the final numbered paragraphs, probably reflects accurately the friendly ecclesiastical point of view.

To a layman reading these pages, it might seem that the Commission should have given relatively more attention to the value of the total service of the war work—including the personal service, recreation, amusements, and educational activities—in accomplishing the purposes that the churches and the Y.M.C.A. had in common, and not quite so much to the specifically "religious work." It must be remembered, however, that it was the "religious work" that the clergy and church boards could conceive of themselves as possibly doing, and it was in this "religious work" that they thought particularly of the Association as representing the churches. Moreover, it was this Commission's task to deal with the relations between the Y.M.C.A. and the churches in the war work.

The Commission threw light upon the Y.M.C.A.'s effort faithfully to serve the churches in the "religious work" when (see page 80) it called attention to the fact that 55 per cent of the religious work secretaries in the United States and 86 per cent of the special religious workers sent overseas were ordained clergymen. It should be added that of the seven hundred and twenty-one persons who served under the Religious Work Department overseas, seven were bishops, twenty were college presidents or professors, and four hundred and forty-three were ministers

from sixteen denominations. There were ninety-seven women. Only fifty-four Y.M.C.A. secretaries and other laymen served in the Religious Work Department.<sup>7</sup> Among the workers in all phases of the war work overseas taken together, there were nearly twice as many ordained men as peacetime Y.M.C.A. secretaries.

The Religious Work Department overseas was under the directorship of prominent clergymen, except during four months in the summer of 1918 and the last three months before all the department organizations in the service to the A.E.F. were closed at the end of July, 1919. Dr. Robert E. Freeman of Los Angeles, Bishop Luther B. Wilson, and President Henry Churchill King of Oberlin served as directors through the period of formulations of policy and active operation.<sup>8</sup>

Even before the National War Work Council got organized, upon the initiative of Dr. John R. Mott, a Co-operating Committee of the Churches<sup>9</sup> was organized (with Robert P. Wilder, senior secretary for religious work of the International Committee, as its executive), and had met and begun its deliberations.<sup>10</sup> This committee consisted of outstanding representative clergymen of leading denominations, eventually twenty-one in number. It continued in an advisory capacity after the Council had created the Religious Work Bureau. When, a year later, a special committee was appointed to supervise the operations of the Bureau, six of its ten members were selected from the

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<sup>7</sup> See *Service with Fighting Men. op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 607.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 600 to 618.

<sup>9</sup> Membership of the Co-operating Committee of the Churches: Bishop Luther B. Wilson, Chairman; President J. Ross Stevenson, Vice-chairman; Bishop Charles S. Burch, Dr. Clarence A. Barbour, President W. Douglas Mackenzie. (These were the original members; the following were added later.) Dr. Peter Ainslee, Dean Charles R. Brown, Dr. William Adams Brown, Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, Bishop Earl Cranston, Bishop Eugene R. Hendrix, Bishop William Lawrence, Dr. William H. Roberts, Dr. Robert E. Speer, Dr. John Timothy Stone, Dr. George W. Truett, Dr. James I. Vance.

<sup>10</sup> *Service with Fighting Men, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 296-297.

membership of the Co-operating Committee of the Churches. Bishop Luther B. Wilson (Methodist) was chairman of the Co-operating Committee. Within this committee were subcommittees on speakers, of which President J. Ross Stevenson of Princeton Theological Seminary was chairman; selection of religious work secretaries, of which President C. A. Barbour of Rochester Theological Seminary was chairman; Bible study, composed of Bishop Wilson, Dr. Robert E. Speer, secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Dean Charles R. Brown of Yale Divinity School, and Dr. Stevenson.<sup>11</sup> It is to be noted that members of the Co-operating Committee were selected by the Y.M.C.A. after the best counsel quickly available; they were not appointed by the denominations. One of the results of foresight and prompt action was that the Religious Work Bureau had its program mapped out and its organization effected before the camps were ready for the incoming recruits.<sup>12</sup>

## Summary

At the close of the war, the relationships between the Y.M.C.A. and most the Protestant denominations appear on the whole to have been good. It is important, however, to summarize the sources of misunderstanding and strain to which the Commission called attention:

1. To the Y.M.C.A. lay mind, promptness of action in this particular emergency seemed most important, while to officials of the denominations consultation with the churches seemed more important.

2. The Y.M.C.A. assumed a right to represent the evangelical Protestant churches in this particular service because of its historic relation to these churches, because of past precedent in the service of the armed forces, and because of its specialized competence in such service; whereas

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 557.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 297.

many under ecclesiastic responsibility felt that it did not have the right to act in the large capacity it did without a mandate from the churches.

3. The Y.M.C.A. prized its independence of ecclesiastical control because of the flexibility, freedom of action, and breadth of relationships it made possible; while many church leaders felt that an organization through which the churches found it necessary in large measure to serve the armed forces should be under at least partial control by the denominations.

4. The Y.M.C.A., in its publicity and its money raising, was primarily concerned with winning moral and financial support for this particular unprecedented service which it had undertaken; while church leaders generally were eager to have the world told also that, through the Y.M.C.A., the Protestant churches were serving the armed forces, even as the Catholic Church was serving them in a more limited way through the Knights of Columbus. Here was a real dilemma for an organization that had undertaken a service of such proportions that it required the support of much more than the Protestant constituency.

There were, of course, other sources of irritation and tension, but these major sources may well be kept in mind as we trace the relationships during the years ahead, especially when the United States becomes involved in another world war.

## CHAPTER VII

# Post-war Relations in Local Communities

IN PREPARATION FOR THE International Convention that met late in November, 1919, the International Committee appointed several notable commissions to make studies on the basis of which the Movement might chart its course intelligently in the post-war situation. The Commission on Relation to the Churches, whose report on the war work was reviewed in the preceding chapter, was primarily concerned with post-war relations. Indeed, its careful analysis of the wartime experience was made primarily to throw light on the considerations and principles that should guide peacetime policies and practices.

This Commission, under President Mackenzie's chairmanship, made a survey of relationships of Y.M.C.A.'s to churches in local communities (1919), and wrote a report containing both description and appraisal. The methods used by the Commission were stated as follows:

The Commission have worked through individuals and groups chosen by themselves. They have asked for and obtained materials for study of the history and organization of the Association. They have arranged for interviews or invited frank statements in writing from many leaders of the various denominations. . . .

In the effort to ascertain the facts regarding the relations prevailing between the Association and the churches in various parts of the country, letters were sent to two hundred and fifty ministers and laymen, and to three hundred secretaries or other representatives of local Young Men's Christian Associations. Those to whom these questionnaires were sent were selected with great care to include all portions of the country,

all denominations, and such individuals as would be likely to represent various points of view. Care was taken to avoid the possibility of getting a biased or partisan view. . . .

One hundred and ninety replies were received from ministers and laymen not officially connected with the Association, from thirty-three states, sixty-four cities, twenty-one towns, and eight rural districts. . . . One hundred and forty-five replies were received from Association men. Of these ninety-three were from cities, fourteen from student groups.<sup>1</sup>

The limitations of such a method in providing an exact survey of opinion will be recognized, but the report is so revealing and so condensed that it should be read in its entirety by anyone giving serious study to the relations of the Y.M.C.A. and the churches. The following digest of the report, made up of excerpts from the document as printed, presents the attitude of church leaders toward the Y.M.C.A.:<sup>2</sup>

*At least nine-tenths of the letters from ministers and laymen put emphasis upon the cordial and appreciative esteem in which the Association is held by them and their communities, even when they point out particular forms of failure or friction and suggest improvement. This is not without significance, in view of the specific request for constructive criticism in every case where there was ground for adverse opinion.*

The Commission reported the following as typical of the criticism of the small minority who were critical and of the incidental criticisms of those who on the whole were commendatory.

A considerable group of correspondents put emphasis upon the fact that the attitude of the churches is not hostile, but rather that of friendly indifference. . . .

Some of them look askance at its [Y.M.C.A.'s] activities. The relations are strained. The Association makes little impression upon the Christian people of the community. When attention is called to the matter, the feeling is expressed that the Association does not return the support of the churches.

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Commission on the Relation of the Y.M.C.A. to the Churches* (1919).

<sup>2</sup> The quotations in the following pages are from *ibid.*

It plans its campaigns and spreads its blanket programs over the community without any consideration for the convenience or counsel of the churches. It has lost touch with them. . . . And the more highly organized and efficient it becomes in the specialized forms of activity to which it sets itself, the greater is the danger of the independence and isolation. . . . For the amount of money received and expended, it does not perform the constructive service that the churches have the right to expect from it.

One of the most sensitive points in the entire discussion is that of the precise delimitation of the spheres of influence and activity of the Young Men's Christian Association and the churches respectively. . . .

There are many who are sensitive to the danger that the Association is likely to be a rival to the churches. They feel that it should carefully refrain from the assumption of functions which belong to the Church. . . .

Emphasis is laid upon the fact that in some localities the secretary has no useful connection with the church of which he is supposed to be a member, or with any of the churches. . . . The feeling is expressed that in certain cases the Association draws away from the Church the materials of manhood which it has enlisted and is in process of training for its activities. To this extent the Church is devitalized. . . . Some complain that its secretaries pose as lay preachers, and that it conducts activities such as preaching services and Bible classes which they say are the distinct province of the Church. . . .

The Association in certain localities assumes the position of a superior institution, and attempts to dictate to the churches changes in theological views, modifications of methods of worship, and improvements in their evangelism.

It is clear that some of the ministers are sensitive to the fact that in many cases insufficient effort is made to interest the men in Association dormitories in attendance upon and activity in neighboring churches. There is a very general sentiment that much more could be done to interest Young Men's Christian Association members in the services and work of the churches than is now being attempted by some of the secretaries.

Very appreciative reference is made to the extremely valuable aid rendered by certain of the secretaries in this matter. Their personal loyalty to the Church, their successful efforts to make sure that the men in their membership are as fully as possible identified with and active in the programs of the

churches, their painstaking care to put adequate information into the hands of the pastors regarding men and boys who might be enlisted in Christian service, going so far in a few cases as to make regular report regarding all the men in the dormitories, and as far as possible in the membership—all these and other details are recorded with appreciation by ministers and laymen.

It must not be forgotten that much of the success of this reciprocal relationship between the Association and the churches depends upon the attitude of the latter. . . . After full allowance has been made for the imperfection of material in the personnel of the Association, the churches are responsible for no small part of whatever aloofness there may appear to exist between them and the Association.

Anyone reading the foregoing quotations would be impressed with two facts, as was the Commission: (1) that the relationships of the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches varied greatly from community to community; and (2) that the opinions of ministers varied so much as to what the Association ought to be and do that no course would please them all. The differences between individual Y.M.C.A.'s give real point to the plea, quoted in the preceding chapter, that some better way be devised of making statements of policy and relationships agreed upon in International Conventions actually operative in all local Associations. That would be hard enough, but how to secure similar attitudes and expectations among the churches of all the different and diverse denominations baffles human imagination.

The Commission then went on to deal with specific aspects of the Y.M.C.A. program.

## **Work with boys**

There is a very general appreciation and approval of the boys' department of the Association.

On the other hand there are negative testimonies of just as frank and positive character. It is claimed that the Association draws away from their homes many boys who ought not to be thus taken away. It is said by some of the correspondents



that boys incline to view their attendance on the Young Men's Christian Association, whether in Bible class or gymnasium, as a legitimate substitute for any church relations.

### **Use of Y.M.C.A. buildings**

Very numerous are the expressions of sincere desire to see the Associations undertake in a much more serious manner the effort to supply the churches of the neighborhood with the auxiliary equipment for physical training, night classes, and other types of needed service for men and boys which few of the churches are prepared to secure for themselves. They have long given the Association unstinted approval as an agency of united Protestantism for the prosecution of certain activities which ought to be undertaken on a community scale. . . . In spite of certain inconvenience to which the registered groups of the Association might be subjected, the question is raised in many of the letters, both of ministers and Association workers, whether the time has not come to make very much more of this feature of Association equipment than has been thought of or deemed possible.

It is suggested that church teams should make use of the gymnasiums, not as Association groups but as church teams. . . .

There are many forms of social activity which the churches might well carry on in behalf of men and boys in the Young Men's Christian Association buildings, without the loss of church sentiment on their part. The Association could thus become the center for the athletic and social work of the Church to that extent, and become the institutional agency of the churches in activities which are usually impossible in the church plant. In many, probably in most, communities the churches are not equipped for much institutional activity. It may not be necessary that they should be if the proper relations can be established between them and the Association. . . . Many ministers seem to believe that the ideal relationship would be that in which the churches did all their institutional work for men and boys through the Association. . . .

In very many of the statements it is disclosed that cordial relations are maintained between the Association and the ministers and ministerial bodies of the town or city. Repeatedly it is mentioned that the Ministers' Association holds the meetings in the building. . . . In several instances mention is made of the fact that the local Church Federation, or whatever body corresponds to such an organization, is housed in the Association building, usually without rental charges. In

such cases it is generally added that there is close and helpful co-operation between the two organizations. . . . Here also, as well as in the cases of individual churches, the Young Men's Christian Association might well be the clearing house through and in concert with which the united churches could carry on their humanitarian and welfare work, athletic, educational and social. It would thus prove a real agency of the church in the accomplishment of its tasks.

### **Direct religious activities**

In general the vocational and cultural educational work of the Association is warmly commended. . . .

The Bible study work of the Association is strongly approved by many correspondents; with some reserve by others; and is regarded as a serious question by still others, unless there can be trained direction, or the co-operation of pastors in the instruction. It is insisted upon that mere numbers in Bible classes are only a liability and not an asset, unless the teaching can be safeguarded from reactionary or freakish elements. Some of the courses now offered in Bible study in certain Associations are criticized by some correspondents as being wholly out of date and unjustifiable from the standpoint of approved Biblical knowledge and religious pedagogy.

The same principles obtain in the case of teacher training classes which have been organized in several communities under Association leadership, and with excellent results. . . .

It is sometimes the case, unfortunately, that the Association assumes the task of religious education, without providing an adequately trained leadership for the organization and supervision of the work. In many instances young men come straight out of high school or college into secretarial positions and are assigned, despite their lack of qualification, the weighty responsibility of directing the program of religious education projected by the Association. For this reason and others that are mentioned it is the feeling of a few of those who write upon the subject that no type of religious education ought to be undertaken at all by an Association but that the entire field should be left to the churches. . . .

Very frequent mention is made of the shop meetings, and in most instances the ministers of the community are spoken of as a co-operating force. In some of these cases the Young Men's Christian Association takes the initiative and the ministers are invited to assist, and in others the churches and the Association co-operate as organizations. . . . The sentiment is

expressed, however, even in connection with these evidences of successful shop services, that a much larger number of the shop men ought to be reached, and that shop meetings ought to be held in a much larger number of institutions.

### Church representation on Y.M.C.A. Boards

There are those who express the opinion that in some more definite manner than at present the churches should have a voice in the management of the local Associations. . . . The suggestion is made that the churches could nominate members of the Board . . . and the Association could confirm or otherwise.<sup>3</sup> In some communities the plan of putting on the Board one or more ministers has been tried with success, and this is believed to have had the effect of binding the Association and the churches more closely together. . . .

It is of the utmost importance to dispel all ground for the feeling expressed by some church leaders that as soon as the Association campaigns are finished the active relations of the churches and the Association are expected to cease.

Still another comment recurs frequently in this inquiry, based on the alleged fact that there is the tendency to put on the governing bodies of the Association an undue proportion of men of large wealth. It is thought that the predominance of this element is likely to be fatal either to a truly democratic or an actually religious atmosphere. Further, the result is said to be a certain conservatism in its policies. It is not free to take up an aggressive program to the extent that would be possible with a more democratic organization. . . .

Recognizing that the spiritual effectiveness of the

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<sup>3</sup> The process by which this could be done would, in the author's judgment, be exceedingly complicated—whether nominations were made by the numerous individual churches, by denominational bodies, or by a federation of churches. There have been many experiments along this line, but from the Associations' standpoint they have not been satisfactory enough to continue. The ablest laymen for Association purposes are seldom enlisted in this way. From time to time, Y.M.C.A.'s that were working closely with the churches but having a hard time financially have experimented with making the Association a really federated organization in which the directors were named by the churches, and the churches, in theory, accepted financial responsibility for the Association. Minneapolis, in the 1870's, and Des Moines, shortly before World War I, were illustrations. Invariably, the Associations have languished financially, and relations with many individual churches have deteriorated. No such arrangement has been permanent.

Y.M.C.A.'s has much to do with the attitude of church leaders, the Commission investigated that aspect of the work of the Associations. After reviewing with appreciation the recreational, social, and educational activities that the Associations had developed as part of their program intended to contribute to rounded Christian personality, the Commission said in part:

The most important question which can be asked is whether the Association by the development of these forms of service has lost sight of its fundamental aim and found that its spiritual work has been actually weakened. It is our judgment, on a survey of the material put at our disposal, that probably no one subject has more engrossed the attention of the whole brotherhood during the last ten years than this. Investigations have been continuously made into this situation. These investigations have been conducted both by the International Committee and by state and local Associations. The result of the manifold inquiries to which we have referred has been a mixed one. Undoubtedly there has been much disquiet created in the hearts of Christian people in general as well as in the hearts of pastors and Association leaders by the extensive complaints that the religious work of the Association was being neglected and was becoming both in mass and in effect subordinate to the other activities of the institutions.

As noted at the opening of this section of the Report, the criticisms must be assessed in the light of the very impressive volume of commendatory expression. They have value particularly as coming in almost every instance from those who are the sincere friends of the Movement, and are only concerned to see it become more effective. There is the feeling often voiced that the time has come for a more constructive, reciprocal and helpful program of co-operation with the churches.

### **The situation in New England**

The Commission on the Relation of the Y.M.C.A. to the Churches refers, with appreciation, to a study made by a Commission on Present Occupation of the Association Field and Their Co-operation with the Churches, appointed by the Y.M.C.A.'s of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which reported in 1917. This study was made under the

direction of Herman C. deAnguera, who gathered much of his material through interviews with two hundred and thirty-seven ministers representing fourteen denominations, and located in nineteen different cities and towns in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. While the latter Commission itself stated that the happy relations of co-operation that appeared to prevail in the Middle West had not been so apparent in New England, its report did present with some accuracy the situation in its own territory.

After reporting that the practical relations between the Associations and the churches of their communities varied greatly from city to city, the Commission said in part:<sup>4</sup>

The testimony, however, is over two to one that the Association is efficient and helpful to the Church but is not so to the maximum degree, though it can be.

The men's clubs of the churches are a problem; they are not doing much in Christian service, they lack spiritual power, they are not furnishing Christian leaders and many of them lack a worthy objective. The Association can help in this problem—this can also be done in the boys' work. . . .

The boy problem in church and Sunday School is serious. The reasons given are as follows:

1. Many high-school boys drop out of Sunday School and church.

2. The Association draws boys from the churches because of superior equipment.

3. The churches cannot reach street boys, but the Association has the means.

The Association must help the churches solve these problems to the church's advantage and so far as possible in the church building.

The Association building should become the universal Parish House for all churches for boys' and men's work on institutional lines. Some ministers feel that the "institutional church" should give way to the Association when near enough

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<sup>4</sup>The following paragraphs are quoted from the *Report of the Commission on Present Occupation of the Association Field and Their Co-operation with the Churches to the State Convention of Massachusetts and Rhode Island* (1917).

to make the Parish House idea possible, but should handle its own boys' and men's work with such extension help as the Association can give when at too great a distance.

Many churches want the Association to handle their church groups of boys as units, thus preserving the church atmosphere and loyalty with the financial side taken care of by the church itself, dealing for its group with the Association.

In its community relationships the Association aims to unify the churches in large community enterprises, interchurch federation projects, shop meetings, open-air meetings and work in citizenship for foreigners, employment, friendship to strangers and social occasions. Branches are called for in many localities and ministers feel that the Association is responsible for starting Association work through centers in communities where the Association alone is the solution of the boy problem.

The hindrances blocking close co-operation of church and Association seem to be principally misunderstandings and distance. Denominational differences, ignorance, indifference and personal equations also enter in to mar the work, but nearly all can be overcome by friendly conferences and unselfish helpfulness.

### **Other factors**

The report of the Massachusetts Commission was unique in that it contained a section upon "The Reactions of the Commission Findings upon the Church Itself" and another upon "The Reaction of the Investigation upon the Theological Seminaries." Such appraisal is conspicuously absent from the reports of commissions made up of Y.M.C.A. laymen and secretaries. This Commission, of whose membership of seven three were ministers and one a prominent church layman, and whose chairman was a minister, felt free to undertake such appraisal. If there were available a record of the opinions and attitudes of Y.M.C.A. leaders regarding the churches comparable to the record we have of the opinion of church leaders regarding the Associations, the problem of relationships could be more completely analyzed and more fruitful plans for the future be adopted.

The Massachusetts Commission undertook to point out

some reasons why, in a given year, one thousand and forty-seven Massachusetts churches received an average of only five young men per church into membership and why, of all boys in the Sunday Schools, only 30 per cent were in the teen age. The Commission came to the conclusion that the most important help the Y.M.C.A. could give the churches was counsel in making the churches' own activities for boys and men more effective.

It is apparent from the investigation of this and other commissions that the churches, as represented by their clergy, expect the Y.M.C.A. to strengthen the churches in their membership and in their program, and to make that the Association's primary concern, as recommended to the Associations by the International Convention in 1913 and cited both by the Mackenzie Commission and the Massachusetts Commission as a policy highly gratifying to the churches.

In the matter of establishing good relations, the clergy expect the Y.M.C.A. to take the responsibility and the initiative, and to do the adjusting. This, also, was recommended by the International Convention in 1913. The practical problem of fulfilling these expectations arose, in part, out of the inability of the International Committee to make actions of the International Convention effective in all local Associations. Probably the application of the Convention Resolutions of 1913 was influenced by the opinions and attitudes of local Association leaders regarding the churches as they found them, in contrast with the more or less ideal churches envisioned in those resolutions. The problem doubtless also arose, in part, out of the attitudes of individual secretaries and clergymen.

The difficulty of maintaining close relations between Y.M.C.A. secretaries and many of the ministers seems to have increased during the post-war years by the broadening of the Y.M.C.A.'s interests to include many of the needs of youth with which the clergy deal very little; by the concentration of the Association upon the needs of youth,

rather than upon the needs of the churches as institutions; and also by the adoption of the methods of modern education, rather than the traditional methods of the churches.

The Mackenzie Commission seemed to be fully justified in its contention that, in their training, Y.M.C.A. secretaries should be given a knowledge of the history, tenets, and points of view of the several denominations; and that ministers should be given a sympathetic understanding of the peculiar characteristics, capacities, and achievements of the Y.M.C.A.

The record of the relations of the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches has made it clear that, beyond the problem of harmonizing their institutional aims and interests, there is the problem of the personal attitudes of ministers and of Y.M.C.A. secretaries.

## Summary

As one reads the reports of both the Mackenzie and the Massachusetts Commissions, of which digests have been given on preceding pages, the most striking impression is that of widespread appreciation and approval of the Y.M.C.A.'s by ministers and leading church laymen at that time. To one acquainted with the diverse desires of different denominations, the report of the Mackenzie Commission is hardly believable when it says "at least nine-tenths of the letters received from ministers and laymen put emphasis upon the cordial and appreciative esteem in which the Association was held."

One gleans, from the large number of criticisms received from the few real critics and of suggestions from others, that the desire was for still larger "returns" to the churches from the great buildings that had been provided for the Y.M.C.A.'s in such particulars as these:

1. More dormitory residents and other members related to the churches.
2. More help to the churches in developing programs



and training leaders for their church groups of boys and young men.

3. More use of Y.M.C.A. buildings by church groups as such and for other church activities.

4. More active participation in church work by individual Y.M.C.A. secretaries.

5. More religious influence. (There was a difference of opinion regarding more religious activities.)

There was considerable desire for some participation by the churches as such in the control of the Associations and, withal, for a more "precise delimitation of the spheres of influence and activity of the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches respectively."

## CHAPTER VIII

# Relationships with the Denominations

**T**HE INFLUENCE OF THE varying attitudes of the many denominations upon the relations of their respective local churches to the Y.M.C.A.'s has been referred to frequently in preceding chapters. It has also become evident that the relations of the national organizations of the Associations and the denominations were becoming more numerous and more important. It was highly significant, therefore, that the Mackenzie Commission, which contained many high ecclesiastics representing a variety of denominations, devoted a section of its report to relations to the denominations. It also made recommendations as to procedures by which relations with the denominations might be guided to mutual satisfaction.

### Evaluation of Y.M.C.A. relations with the denominations

The Commission noted what has been observed previously in this history, namely that, in relations between city Y.M.C.A.'s and local churches, there had been little involvement of the International Committee and denominations as such. But the Commission observed that the foreign work of the Y.M.C.A.'s and their work in state universities had necessitated relationships at the national level. The war work of the Y.M.C.A. also, being directed by a National War Work Council, brought the necessity of developing relationships between the National Y.M.C.A., the denominations, and some of the national interdenominational boards and councils. The consideration of the relations between the Y.M.C.A. and the denominations was a new element that first entered into International

Convention action in 1919. So important was the Commission's statement that it is quoted here almost in its entirety:<sup>1</sup>

We must recognize at the outset that there has been hitherto no organic connection between the organized denominations and the supervisory boards or committees of the Association, yet the Association has always strenuously claimed that it springs from the heart and life of the evangelical denominations. . . .

It is an obvious fact that there has never been any official definition of the attitude of the denominations toward the Association. So far as known, none of them through its highest court or assembly has attempted to set itself in any positive attitude towards this movement. Of some of the denominations it may be said that practically all of their leaders have manifested constant sympathy with the work of the Association in general, even though they have felt compelled to make criticism of some of its operations in detail.

On the other hand, there are certain denominations whose leaders have always assumed an attitude, not of active hostility, but of aloofness, which has been expressive of their unwillingness to injure a good work but of their doubt or conviction that it was a movement wrongly related to the organized Church. This attitude is traceable to several convictions. In the first place, the existence of the Association seems to contravene the theory that no organized work should be carried on in the name of Christian propaganda which does not derive its authority directly from at least one denomination.

In the second place, this objection based on a theory of church government passes over into an objection based upon the fact that the Association inevitably becomes a teacher of Christianity, and especially during the last decade has deliberately set itself forth as an expounder of Christian truth. This it does through its Bible classes, its selection of speakers at conferences and discussion of the fundamentals of Christianity, and now most especially through the growing power of its publishing house, Association Press. These operations, it is said, are carried on for the most part by laymen attached to a self-accredited organization, who have rarely had special

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<sup>1</sup> The following pages are quoted from *Report of the Commission on the Relation of the Y.M.C.A. to the Churches* (1919).

training in the fields in which they are concerned either as themselves authors and teachers or as selectors and judges of other speakers and teachers.

In the third place, certain denominations which cherish very deeply liturgical forms of worship view with dislike the fact that the Association is manned most largely by men from denominations which have no liturgies, and therefore the religious meetings which it conducts are spreading habits of communal worship alien to those cherished by the denominations referred to.

In the fourth place, a serious objection is made, especially by one denomination, which opposes it for the very reason that it promotes church unity. A denomination which sedulously avoids any official action which would bring it into fellowship with other denominations can be easily understood as pledged beforehand to this attitude of hostility to the Young Men's Christian Association.

In the fifth place, correspondence shows that a considerable amount of criticism of the Association which is made in the name of the organized churches is based upon a doubt whether the religious values of the Association's work correspond to the amount of money expended or to the expectation in this regard cherished by the earnest people in the various Protestant communities.

While we have thus painstakingly set forth the principal objections to the Association and its work, we must be careful to state also the fact that from all the denominations known as Protestant and evangelical, the Association derives much of its income and its workers, and that many powerful men even among the denominations that are most aloof from expressions of open sympathy with its work are to be found among its most earnest and generous supporters. Yet the existence of this attitude most undoubtedly demands from the Association and its friends serious consideration and compels its leaders to seek the ways of consultation which will clear away misunderstandings, help it to remove those causes of objection which can be removed, and so far as possible to discover the true methods of co-operation.

There is, however, a very large field of actual co-operation with the denominations and their boards which we must briefly describe. To begin with, reference may be made to the fact that the Association has maintained close relations with other inter-denominational agencies like itself, such as the Student Volunteer Movement, the Missionary Education Movement,

the Laymen's Missionary Movement, and has been seeking to arrange modes of co-operation with Sunday School and other agencies in relation to its work among boys.

Further, the active relations of the Association with certain important agencies which may be described as official inter-denominational agencies, carrying a real measure of ecclesiastical authority, must be noted. The Foreign Missionary work of the Young Men's Christian Association has grown up very rapidly, but from its beginning the direction of it has been carried on in close affiliation with the Conference of Foreign Missionary Boards whose headquarters is in New York, as well as with the organized boards of missionaries on the various foreign fields. It has entered no field without the approval and often it has been at the suggestion, of the missionaries themselves. One of the most interesting as well as important examples of co-operation is that which has arisen between the Student Department of the Young Men's Christian Association and the Council of Church Boards of Education in relation especially to the work in State Universities. Several conferences have been held which have been attended by representatives from the Church Boards of Education, the Conference of Church Workers in State Universities, the Student Departments of the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association. . . . The result of these conferences has been the continuous development of more effective co-operation, the particulars of which need not be here stated, as they change almost from year to year with the growth of experience. But always these changes tend towards a more open understanding and a more close co-operation and unity of action among all the forces which are seeking on the campus to realize the life of the Church of Christ.

Many church leaders have been consulted on the subject of this section of the Report. Even those who are most full of criticism recognize that it would be disastrous in the extreme if the Association were to lose its power or cease to exist. No such desire is in the heart of any leader of the evangelical denominations. They are all convinced, however, that measures must be taken to define more clearly from both sides the mutual relations of the denominations and the Association. They would welcome a full discussion and definition of the bases of authority on which the Association carries on its work as evangelist and religious teacher as well as social guide to men. Further, they feel that definite steps must be taken by the Associations to discover those modes of co-operation which

shall remove just grounds of criticism, and so lend to the Association the full power which must come from an unclouded confidence on the part of the churches, and which must come to the churches from a wisely developed, loyal and evangelical purpose filling the whole operations and ever widening agencies of the Association.

All these leaders are practically unanimous that measures must be taken for establishing channels of constant consultation between the denominations and the Association, that its policies and its larger plans ought not to be defined or undertaken without consultation with those who are not primarily connected with the Association but who do in some official manner carry the authority of the denominations. What shape these consultations should take, what provisions should be made for their consistency, authority and effectiveness, has not been clearly defined by anyone. While some will not be contented without a direct representation of the denominations on the governing board of the Association in its national and local forms, the majority of those who have been consulted among the church leaders, many of them clergymen of the highest standing, desire to see the Association maintained as a layman's movement, possessing freedom of initiative and the peculiar qualities which have characterized its best work and its highest influence in the past. They deprecate anything like ecclesiastical control of the Association and disavow the desire that it shall be dominated by clerical influences. They believe that some way must be worked out for establishing co-operation that shall avoid the positive dangers suggested by the words, "ecclesiastical control."

Finally, it should be pointed out as a fact of the utmost significance that where the Association has worked in the most perfect harmony with the will and mind and spirit of the churches it has been in those cases where it has been able to consult with and to form something like vital relations with interdenominational institutions. Its work with the Student Volunteer Movement has powerfully helped to bring many young men into missionary service. Its work with the Foreign Missionary Conference Boards has opened up forms of service in many missionary fields which the traditional methods of the missionaries had prevented them from entering in any large way. Its work with the Council of Boards of Education contains also the seeds of promise for a wonderful future of Christian service in universities and in the vast field of boy life.

## **Recommendations for improved relations**

In view of the events that had been surveyed and the findings that had been reached, the Commission made the following definite recommendations, which were adopted by the Fortieth International Convention of the Young Men's Christian Associations (1919) :

1. That in the selection and training of secretaries the Association shall henceforth give due place to their thorough instruction in the religious aims of the Association and shall give thorough training in the Scriptures, Christian doctrine, and the history and meaning of the Church and of the churches to all of its secretaries, and advanced work to those whose main service is to lie in the field of the distinctively religious work.

2. That the Convention resolve that the time has come to open direct negotiations with the leading denominations known as evangelical, for a careful study of the relations obtaining between the evangelical churches and the Association; and that it authorize the International Committee to appoint a Commission that shall enter into these negotiations.<sup>2</sup>

In fulfillment of this Convention instruction, the Commission on the Approach to the Churches was organized. Its personnel was made up of ten clergymen representing as many evangelical denominations, four other members at large, and six Association men representing local, county, state, and international organizations.<sup>3</sup> Five of the ten clergymen had served on the previous commission, whose report has been quoted at length in this and the preceding two chapters.

In order to secure firsthand information, as well as to facilitate the utmost frankness in discussion, the Commis-

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Membership of the Commission: William Horace Day, chairman; W. W. Alexander; Clarence A. Barbour; F. H. Burnham; Ernest D. Burton; James Cannon, Jr.; W. I. Chamberlain; F. M. Hansen; E. W. Hearne; R. L. Kelly; F. H. Knubel; F. O. Koehler; W. Douglas Mackenzie; Thomas Nicholson; George W. Richards; Robert E. Speer; Henry C. Swearingen; Elmer T. Thienes; James I. Vance; and A. H. Whitford.

sion conducted a series of eleven conferences, or hearings, between groups of denominational and Association leaders. The personnel of each denominational group was determined by the Commissioner representing that body, who aimed to include the executives of the denomination or its boards in those fields where activities of the Churches and Association most often parallel, such as student and boys' work; the pastors of local churches; and, in some instances, laymen. The Association group in each case was determined by the same principle, and represented local, state, and international leadership.

This Commission reported to the International Convention in 1922. It expanded and brought up to date the survey made by its predecessor. Regarding the religious work of the Association, the Commission found reasons for encouragement:<sup>4</sup>

No single line of evidence ran so uniformly through the hearings as the desire, even insistence, on the part of the churches' representatives that the Associations produce much larger tangible spiritual results. . . .

As recently as May, 1922, a body of 120 thoroughly representative employed officers of the Association, appointed to locate the difficulties which are hindering the progress of religious work, to discover the principles which will guide each Association in working out its own program, and to indicate the sources of power in producing Christian character, made a pronouncement of courage, clarity and comprehension. . . .

There is cause of gratification in the unity arrived at between what might be described as two parties within the Association during recent years—one maintaining that all our work is religious work; the other recognizing religious values only in activities directly and immediately evangelistic in character. The Association leaders are now generally awake to the rich spiritual possibilities of their varied programs; to their obligation to realize these possibilities all along the line; and to the fact that these cannot be realized without the appli-

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<sup>4</sup>The following pages are quoted from *Proceedings of the Forty-first International Convention* (1922), pp. 233 to 250.



cation at every point of the dynamic released through prayer, Bible study, evangelism, and service in the spirit of Christ. . . .

It is essential that the churches meet the Association's approach for co-operation in its spiritual task heartily and constructively. . . .

The Commission finds that critical judgment is sometimes passed on the Associations through the failure to recognize as such the Christian character-making processes of high value that are indigenous in departments not labelled religious but which nevertheless are presenting and exemplifying Christian truth with a persuasive fidelity that is steadily winning and holding allegiance to Christ and the Church. . . .

The evangelical churches have jointly contributed to the membership and leadership of the Association a composite theological character ranging from extreme conservatism to ultra-liberalism, which properly and inevitably will be reflected in a measure in their literature and teachings. The effort on the part of any one section of evangelical thought, whether outside or inside the Association, to dominate the entire body is indefensible.

## **Work with students**

Marked expansion of church work in state universities began after World War I. The Southern branches of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist denominations launched vigorous programs. The Commission commented:

There is reason to be gratified at the increased activity of the Church agencies and the increasingly cordial relationship between the Association and these agencies. . . .

Fine working relationships are operative in many institutions where the programs of churches and Association are both vigorous, although not uniform in their operation.

The various hearings of the Commission disclosed the fact that most of the friction developed by the programs of the churches and Association has been due to lack of mutual understanding and unwisely chosen personnel. . . .

Various types of organization have been worked out. . . .

Some believe the distinctive requirements of the churches are met by making the leadership and program of the local churches in the university community attractive and challenging to students, and leaving the Association organized and

controlled along its original lines but securing such representation of these churches on the executive agencies of the Association as to insure comprehensive dealing with the entire task in harmony with the programs of the churches.

[At the other extreme,] another type is created by federating the representatives of the several denominational student groups into an interchurch agency, usually called the Christian Association. No Association with a separate existence and distinct program remains apart from what inheres in the composite organization. The executive boards and officers are chosen by the respective denominational groups, sometimes in part by the national Educational Boards of the denominations concerned, which also make direct financial contributions to the budget.<sup>5</sup>

The governing purpose should be in each locality to face the whole task which demands accomplishment, to enlist all the available forces, and to co-ordinate their energy in the way most adapted to achieve the largest and best results. Since no type of organization has been developed which can be accepted as standard or as adapted to all situations, the best plan for any local situation must be worked out by the co-operation of the forces available in that situation and with frank and fearless experimentation.

## Work with boys

Regarding the boys' work program, the Commission stated:

This program has been adapted to meet the special needs of grade school, high school, and employed boys. The Hi-Y Movement for high school boys and the Employed Boys' Brotherhood for working boys have become nation-wide in scope and influence. . . . There were enrolled in Association activities over 325,000 boys. Among the results 19,127 made decisions for the Christian life and 6,375 united with churches.

The activity of the churches in the field of boys' work is increasing rapidly. Growing attention is being given to the religious education of youth. Churches are concerned to reach and retain more boys in Sunday School and other phases of their programs. It is increasingly recognized that a program limited to religious instruction on Sunday is insufficient, and

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<sup>5</sup> This was the Pennsylvania plan.

that a fourfold program seeking to develop the boys in body, mind and spirit and in service relationships, is essential. . . .

In the formation of all Association programs of work with boys, the duty and wisdom of constant counselling with the churches is recognized. The Young Men's Christian Association is seeking increasingly to so conduct its work with boys as to relate them permanently to the churches. The Association Employed Officers' meeting at Lake Geneva in 1921 made the following indicative declaration: "The Association is anxious to co-operate with the churches in producing a fourfold program of work with boys which would be acceptable alike to denominational and interdenominational agencies dealing with boys."

There is misunderstanding and friction where the activities of boys in a Young Men's Christian Association building have tended to draw them away from the local church and its program. Such situations tend to develop when boys come as individuals to the membership of the Association. . . . There is disappointment on the part of some churches because the Association has not turned more boys into their memberships; on the part of Association leaders because of the failure of the churches to hold boys that have been turned to them. In too many communities there is a state of mutual indifference. . . .

There is a growing feeling among specializing Sunday School workers, local and national, that the Young Men's Christian Association is overlapping into their field, and to some extent interfering with their plan for a program for both boys and girls by its emphasis on boys alone. The newly organized International Council of Religious Education, constituted out of the former Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations and the International Sunday School Association, presents the certainty either of greatly increasing friction or of lessening it, depending upon the wisdom with which the Associations' working relations thereto are mutually examined and dealt with, both in their local and national aspects. . . .

Almost every hearing presented the need for better coordination in the common activities of the churches, the Associations, and the Boy Scouts, especially in the towns and smaller cities. . . .

The time has come when the churches and the Young Men's Christian Association can achieve a much more effective relationship in the education of boys in Christian citizenship.

1. Leaders of the churches express deep interest in what is known as the church group-membership plan, which is being developed in several Associations. The relationship of the individual boy to his church is stressed in the plan and the leadership of his own church goes with the boy in all of his activities. . . .

2. The church group camp plan has proved mutually advantageous to both the churches and the Association. . . .

3. The community plan of work inaugurated by the Association almost uniformly contributes to good relationships with the churches. By this plan without additional Association buildings the Association assists the churches and other community institutions in a given area to meet the fourfold needs of men and boys; utilizing the buildings and equipment of churches, schools, and other community agencies. . . .

4. An increasing number of Association executives and laymen occupy positions of leadership as church and Sunday School officers. . . .

5. Where the churches utilize the Young Men's Christian Association to function as their interdenominational agency to work with natural groups, a sound condition exists. The work of the Association on behalf of the churches with high school boys through the Hi-Y Movement and of employed boys through the Employed Boys' Brotherhood, are the best examples of this principle.

## **Need for systematic consultation**

The Commission's further counsel and recommendations may be summarized as follows:

The potential usefulness of Association experience, personnel, and equipment to the forces of evangelical Christianity has as yet been very partially explored and developed. In the judgment of the Commission there will be wisdom in the churches discovering and utilizing the unappropriated resources here before turning easily to the creation of new interdenominational agencies for service in fields where the Association is competent. To achieve in this direction is a challenge in Christian engineering worthy the effort of the best churchmanship. . . .

The Commission proposed certain principles of co-

operation, to be applied at local, state, and national levels, as follows:

1. Recognition by the Y.M.C.A. of the primacy of the Church and the churches.
2. Maintenance of the Associations' independence of ecclesiastical control.
3. Agreement between the Associations and the churches as to what they should expect from one another.
4. Annual conference between the Associations and representatives of the churches before projecting plans and work for the year.

The Commission continued:

Because of the desire and sense of need expressed in nearly every hearing by national leaders of the churches for direct contact with Association representatives, in respect to common tasks and activities, the Commission recommends:

1. That the Convention authorize the International Committee to invite the judicatory or advisory body of each denomination or communion with which it has important relations to appoint a standing committee on the Young Men's Christian Association, or to designate one of its committees already in existence with which representatives of the International Committee will confer on matters on mutual concern to the two bodies. . . .

2. That the same denominations or communions be asked to name one member of a general counselling commission with which the International Committee or its Executive Committee and Officers shall hold conference at least annually on such problems of relationship as are national in scope.

The Commission did not stress the necessity of keeping unchanged the evangelical church-membership test of active membership as the guarantee of mutually helpful relations; rather, it put the emphasis upon actual collaboration in the service of youth and upon organized conferences for that purpose. The same International Convention that received this Commission's report and authorized the creation of a General Counselling Commission of the

Churches made a second modification<sup>6</sup> in the historical basis of active membership by providing that:

Any Association or Branch, at its discretion, may elect or appoint, not to exceed ten per cent of its Managing Board, from members of the Association not identified with churches defined in Sections 1 and 2 [as evangelical], upon their regular nomination by a Nominating Committee of the said Board, and upon the acceptance by the nominees of the Paris Basis as their personal declaration of purpose; but only those who are members in good standing of churches as defined [evangelical] shall be eligible to election as voting delegates in an International Convention.<sup>7</sup>

New and distinctive factors in this report compared with the reports of earlier Commissions were:

1. The discovery of growing interest among ministers in utilizing the programs, materials, leadership, and facilities of the Y.M.C.A. for churches.

2. The discovery of potential competition with the Boy Scouts and the International Council of Religious Education.

3. The recommendation of regular conferences and co-operative planning by the National Committees representing the various types of Associations and the various national program committees with corresponding departments of denominations and with the corresponding inter-denominational councils.

4. The recommendation of an over-all Counselling Commission of the Churches, to be a new creation of the Y.M.C.A. providing direct and regular conference with

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<sup>6</sup> The first modification had been made by the International Convention of 1907, which granted to Student Y.M.C.A.'s the privilege of receiving into active membership men who were not members of Protestant evangelical churches but who subscribed to a personal statement of religious faith and to the purposes of the Student Y.M.C.A.'s, both of which statements were prescribed by that Convention. A further change was made by the Convention of 1922.

<sup>7</sup> *Proceedings of the Forty-first International Convention, op. cit., p. 377.*

the denominations themselves (not through the Federal Council of Churches).

With the International Convention of 1922 began a process of reorganizing the general agency structure of the Y.M.C.A., which absorbed a major part of the creative energy of the International Committee and of many State Committees until after the National Council was organized, in the autumn of 1924, and its boards and staff began to function, in 1925.

Nevertheless, overtures were made to all Churches that were members of the Federal Council of Churches, requesting them to appoint standing Y.M.C.A. Committees and to name one member each to a General Counselling Commission. These overtures had to be acted upon, in most instances, by the national conventions of the several denominations. That required time. By the autumn of 1924, thirteen denominations had named members of the General Counselling Commission<sup>8</sup>; and a majority of these had set up committees or assigned definite responsibility in this particular to some existing committee. The first meeting of the Commission was held October 23, 1924, with the ten denominations represented.

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<sup>8</sup> Churches co-operating: Church of the United Brethren in Christ; General Synod of the Reformed Church in America; General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States; International Convention of Disciples of Christ; Methodist Episcopal Church (North); National Council of the Congregational Churches; Northern Baptist Convention; Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (North); Presbyterian Church in the United States (South); Protestant Episcopal Church; Society of Friends; United Lutheran Church in America; and United Presbyterian Church of North America.

The following churches participated later: African Methodist Episcopal; African M. E. Zion; Christian; Colored M. E.; Evangelical; Methodist Episcopal (South); Methodist Protestant; and National Baptist Convention.

## CHAPTER IX

# General Movements Affecting Y.M.C.A.-Church Relations (1919 to 1925)

**W**HEN, AT THE CLOSE OF THE WAR, the Y.M.C.A. found itself under a flood of criticism of its war work service in France, the Protestant churches, because they considered the Association the agency of Protestantism in that service, came loyally to its defense. But the many changes that took place during the post-war period, from 1919 to 1925, in both the Y.M.C.A. and the churches, and in the federated church agencies and other agencies sustaining relations to the Protestant churches, made more complicated the relations of the Associations and the churches. Some of these changes led to increased co-operation, some to tension.

### Period of great activity

At the Employed Officers' Conference of 1918, there was evident a strong impetus toward a service in local communities relatively as comprehensive and adequate as the Association's war work service had been. At the International Conventions of 1919 and 1922, "the occupation of the field" was the major slogan.

During the war, there had been great expansion in some phases of regular work—notably in the rural field, in industries, on the railroads, and in the colleges. After the war, this expansion was maintained or increased in all fields except the colleges, until the depression of 1921-1922 caused a recession. There was also a post-war strengthen-



ing of work among colored people, and a substantial sum from war work funds was appropriated to establish the Interracial Commission in the South.

In the City Associations, there was a large expansion in boys' work; the beginning of special organizations of young men, aged eighteen to twenty-four; and a marked increase in recreation, especially athletics and physical education outside the Y.M.C.A. membership. Group work<sup>1</sup> was studied afresh, and the contributions of educational science appropriated for character development.

Shortly after the war, the Y.M.C.A. resumed its great building campaign, which had been interrupted. During the following decade, the American public contributed more money for this purpose than in any previous period of equal length. The lists of contributors were longer than ever, indicating an increasing support by the general public. The building funds prior to 1900 had been provided almost wholly by members of the Protestant Evangelical churches. By the time the United States entered World War I, the number of contributors in larger cities generally totaled several thousand, including members of all churches, many persons affiliated with no church, and business corporations. In 1911 Julius Rosenwald, a Jew, made his famous offer to contribute twenty-five thousand dollars toward a Y.M.C.A. building for Negroes in every

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<sup>1</sup> "Group work" as a technical term had not yet come into common use at the beginning of this period, but the phenomenon it came later to designate had been a feature of Y.M.C.A. activities beginning with the first little group led by George Williams in London and similar groups inspired by it elsewhere. It was these groups that became the first organization to bear the name Young Men's Christian Association. The Y.M.C.A. name for such groups was "club." Around the turn of the century, classes had come to be the dominant type of program unit; but by 1910 small organized boys' clubs, with all-round programs, were on their way as a great development in program. By 1919 young men's clubs, which had always been a major feature in college Y.M.C.A.'s as Bible classes, and in County Y.M.C.A.'s with a more diversified program, had entered upon a new cycle as an important feature of City Associations.

city whose citizens would contribute at least an additional<sup>2</sup> seventy-five thousand dollars. In this post-war period, while the major source of the largest individual contributions continued to be the members of Protestant churches, the erection of Y.M.C.A. buildings was generally accepted as a responsibility of the general public.

Many denominations undertook the raising of large funds for forward movements. Of these the Methodist Centenary Movement was probably the most ambitious. Local churches improved their situation, but the most conspicuous factor in these movements was the enlargement of denominational enterprises: home missions, work in state educational institutions, religious education in church-related colleges, equipment and endowment of these colleges, and foreign missions. All this was accompanied by the strengthening of the denominational loyalties of church members.

At the same time, interdenominational movements were active. The Interchurch World Movement was launched in 1921 to bring into concert the several denominational forward movements and to supplement them with interdenominational projects. A nation-wide financial canvass of the non-member "friends of the churches"—sometimes called the "brothers-in-law"—was set up. A great survey was made of the task of the Protestant churches at home and abroad, on the basis of which division of responsibility between the several denominations and their interdenominational agencies might intelligently be achieved. The disposition of the surveyors and planners was to magnify the work of the churches and of new interdenominational agencies designed to undertake service that had been pioneered by the Christian Associations and other independent organizations.

The Interchurch World Movement was, in large meas-

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<sup>2</sup>A total of twenty-seven such buildings were erected by 1938.

ure, a lay movement, similar in that respect to the two other great lay crusades: the Laymen's Missionary Movement and the Men and Religion Forward Movement. It was not officially sponsored by the Y.M.C.A., but many Y.M.C.A. secretaries and lay leaders co-operated. Whether the Movement had in it the elements of success may be a debatable question; but, in any event, the depression of 1921-1922 was too much for it. Its failure was spectacular. The denominations eventually had to underwrite its deficit for survey and promotion, and its interdenominational projects had to be abandoned. Some denominations that had overreached themselves were unable to collect enough money to carry out the whole of their expansion programs.

It was in this situation of readjustment, great activity, and greater hopes, on the part of both the Y.M.C.A. and the churches, that the Commission on the Approach to the Churches had carried on its conferences and made its investigations during 1919-1922, which were considered in the preceding chapter. Generally speaking, local Y.M.C.A.'s and churches were drawing together in actual co-operation and collaboration, whereas the national bodies of both were developing policies and projects that increased both the possibilities of co-operation and the danger of competition. Hence the Commission's emphasis upon the need of regular and stated conference regarding boys' work, rural work, student work, as well as general policies of the Y.M.C.A. and the denominations.

### **Steps toward increased co-operation**

In 1922, as previously stated, the International Sunday School Association and the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations united to form the International Council of Religious Education. The new organization began to develop expansive plans, to be carried out by the churches. Y.M.C.A. leaders had participated in the deliberations that eventuated in the formation of the International Council, and they continued to collaborate as

the new consolidated organization developed its program. The Y.M.C.A.'s, during recent years, had been developing an all-round group program for boys, known as the Christian Citizenship Training Program, which was considered as being particularly adapted to church groups; and churches were being encouraged to utilize it in co-operation with Y.M.C.A.'s. In accord with recommendations of the Commission on the Approach to the Churches, this program and related materials, and the experience of the Associations were made available to the International Council and were used by it.

In 1919, the Boy Scouts of America began a great expansion and employed Dr. George J. Fisher to head up their field organization. Dr. Fisher had for many years been senior secretary of the Physical Education Department of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s. The Scouts proceeded to organize many new troops in schools, under American Legion auspices, but also in churches. The Cub Scout section was launched at about the same time that the Y.M.C.A. began to encourage work among boys from seven to eleven years of age. Various experiments with scouting for boys over fifteen were undertaken, and the Y.M.C.A. added Junior Hi-Y. Neither organization would have admitted competitive purposes, since the needs exceeded their combined efforts; but here was a situation highly favorable to friction. Accordingly, the Commission advised friendly conference between the Y.M.C.A. and Boy Scouts in order to avoid getting their wires crossed in their work with the churches.

These two organizations—the International Council of Religious Education and the Boy Scouts of America—were destined to occupy an increasingly important place in the work of local churches, the Council replacing the Y.M.C.A. in relation to teacher-training and study courses, and the Scouts providing a through-the-week program for boys from the ages of nine to fifteen. Fortunately, these developments did not prevent co-operation by the Associa-

tions with the churches in its work with boys, but merely delimited it. Co-operation took other forms, as revealed by the Commission of 1922 and by later studies. But these other two organizations were nevertheless destined to have far-reaching influence upon certain types of co-operation between the Associations and the churches.

### **Unfavorable religious climate**

After the war, the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy flared up like a prairie fire. Reaction against modern scholarship, under the leadership of William Jennings Bryan, reached its peak in the Dayton, Tennessee, trial. Social prejudice found organized expression in the Ku Klux Klan. At the other extreme there flourished a vapid variety of "humanism," and a degree of toleration that did not distinguish between mores and the moral law.

With every intervening gradation between these extremes present in Protestant churches, many Associations found it more difficult than ever to please the churches with their religious teaching and propaganda; indeed, they found it impossible to engage in any definite religious work without offending some part of their church constituency. Thus while the International Committee leaned strongly toward a liberal position in its selection of speakers and in publications, and hence came under the suspicion of the conservatives and the fire of the Fundamentalists, local Associations sought to keep out of the controversy and concentrate on helping all the churches in their promotional and recreational activities.

Y.M.C.A. Sunday afternoon religious meetings for men, which had become a source of great disappointment to the Associations and a subject of increasing criticism on the part of church leaders, were generally discontinued. The vigorous, organized promotion of Y.M.C.A. Bible classes, even among boys, was relaxed; instead, efforts were made to increase the enrollment in Sunday School classes and to build up through-the-week programs for church

groups. The chief dependence of most Associations for "religious results" in their own work was upon clubs of boys, of young men, and of men that engaged in fourfold programs in which instruction in Christian ethics and commitment to Christian living were a definite part.

Educational processes in character education were given increased study by many leaders of program administration in the Y.M.C.A.'s, notably in the East. Confidence in the "departmentalized" fourfold-program concept declined, and enthusiasm for the rather highly standardized Christian Citizenship Training Program for boys waned. The progressive-education movement and the mental-hygiene movement exerted considerable influence. Methods of weaving religious instruction into recreational and educational activities, formerly popular, came under question, as did former methods of appealing for commitment to the Christian life. Religion was held to be important, even vital, in personality development; but as to the method of incorporating it into character-building programs, there was much confusion. Consequently, there was much friendly controversy within Y.M.C.A. circles, which in itself reduced the religious aggressiveness of the Associations.

All this now appears to have been an inescapable part of the process of readjustment to new scientific knowledge of human personality; to the consequent changing educational, moral, and religious concepts. Eventually, constructive results followed, one of which was the more intelligent use of activities and personal influence in the Associations—upon which, as a matter of fact, major dependence had always been placed for character development. It is also gratifying to note that, amid all this confusion as to methods, the Y.M.C.A.'s succeeded in maintaining their supreme emphasis upon Christian character.

By 1925, the popular mood in most sections of the country was unfavorable to religion, especially to conventional concepts, practices, and institutions of religion. The spir-

itual weariness, moral relaxation, and intellectual confusion that followed the war had been succeeded by a period in which "self-expression" was the slogan. Inhibitions and suppressed desires were disparaged by the intelligentsia, who rationalized the popular disposition to indulge in license, and whose ideas percolated down through popular literature and the movies. Those who lived through that period will remember the popular terms, "flaming youth" and "the revolt of youth." Many parents also blazed up again, and had to be admonished by their children: "Act your age!!" And there was even a goodly number of smouldering grandparents—not in revolt, of course, but "making a little whoopee." Resistance to prohibition by the socially élite was aped by the upper middle-class and also spread upward from the submerged immigrant groups. The two social extremes met in the business of the bootlegging gangsters. Space does not permit further to describe the spiritual situation in America during the late 1920's. They were the reckless, extravagant years; the boom years; the years of the headlong rush to the crash, when few appeared to have any true understanding or perspective with regard to the real values of life.

Naturally, the membership of the churches was not unaffected by the popular mood; and, among the unchurched, evangelism didn't stand a chance. Because the Associations were more realistic than the churches in accepting the situation, as conditions grew worse in the later twenties many of the clergy, in their disappointment, accused the Associations of no longer supporting the churches. In retaliation, Y.M.C.A. workers would point to the failure of the churches. It was the old story: one person in distress blaming another, until each came to realize that both were in the same difficulty, for which neither nor both were wholly to blame.

Among the serious-minded youth, especially in the colleges, there appeared a new sensitiveness to social injustice and a fine social idealism. These, however, were often

accompanied by revolt against conventional religious concepts, methods, and missionary programs. It must be remembered that the twenties were a period of great intellectual activity and scientific achievement, which provided much material for the later use of philosophy and religion. At the time, however, much of this new learning seemed merely to add to the confusion.

The Associations and the churches were engaged in commendable improvements of methods, but both were without commanding strategy for dealing with the situation. Nevertheless, the leaders of both maintained their faith and courage, and very generally attained clearer thinking to support their high purpose.

### **Important developments in Y.M.C.A.-Church relations**

Four important movements were taking shape or expanding during this period, from 1919 to 1925, that were to have increasing effect upon the relations of the Y.M.C.A. and the Protestant churches: the Church Federation Movement, the Community Organization Movement, the Interconfessional Movement in the Y.M.C.A., and the Ecumenical Movement.

*The Church Federation Movement.* The Federal Council of Churches, by 1920, had established at least sixteen departments, in addition to other less important committees. It had stepped up its regular budget from the pre-war figure of eighty-five thousand dollars to three hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, and was raising an additional hundred and fifty thousand in 1920 for post-war relief projects. Significantly, only twelve thousand dollars of the regular budget came from the denominations, as against three hundred and twelve thousand from individuals and foundations. Dr. John A. Hutchinson, in his history of the Federal Council, *We Are Not Divided*, says:

The importance of this fact in understanding the Council's program and significance can hardly be overestimated, for on the one hand it has the status of an official body and on the



other hand the independence of a largely self-supporting organization.<sup>1</sup>

The Council continued to increase its regular budget after the depression of 1921-1922 until, in 1928, it was four hundred and ten thousand dollars. The corporate contributions by that time had reached eighty-nine thousand dollars but they have never exceeded 40 per cent of total contributions.

The Y.M.C.A. was one among eleven agencies related to the Federal Council as "co-operating, affiliated and consultative bodies"—six official interdenominational and five independent bodies. Association secretaries served on the Executive Committee, and on several departmental and other committees, in the capacity previously indicated.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, the Federal Council continued gradually, as the official representative of the denominations, to take on interchurch projects and to press forward in fields of service where the Y.M.C.A. had previously served the churches.

The Federal Council took no official part in the Interchurch World Movement, but inherited some of the values that were salvaged out of it. Most later national interchurch movements have been under the auspices of the Federal Council.

The local Church Federation Movement really got underway after the war. Promotion by the Federal Council was revived on a sounder basis, mainly under the guidance of Roy B. Guild, resulting in a great development of federation work.

During the first twenty years of the Federal Council's history (1908 to 1928), forty new local and five state federations were established. Generally, the local Y.M.C.A.'s co-operated in organizing local federations, contributing valuable staff service, and often making substantial con-

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<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson, John A., *We Are Not Divided* (New York, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1941), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> See page 61.

tributions in the form of space for federation headquarters. In some cities where a "community policy" had been pursued, like Minneapolis, the Y.M.C.A. had already promoted district or city-wide councils of churches for co-operation, particularly in programs for youth. Not infrequently, these councils included churches of denominations that had not affiliated with the Federal Council. Some of these churches later declined even to enter a local federation.

Local Christian Associations frequently were included in local federations. Their exact relationship was often indefinite, but always the Associations were recognized as something apart from parish churches. In a few instances, they were recognized as the special agents of united Protestantism—practically as departments of the federations—whose function it was to perform those services to and on behalf of the churches for which, through the years, the Association demonstrated its peculiar ability. Such arrangements officially staked off for the Y.M.C.A. a large area related to specialized work for men and boys, other than religious instruction, the latter being generally assigned in like manner to the Councils of Religious Education.

However, even the most favorable arrangements reduced the field of responsibility of the Y.M.C.A. in relation to interchurch projects and service to the churches. Commonly, the Y.M.C.A.'s had been the chief interdenominational organizations in their communities, relied upon by the churches for leadership in the Laymen's Missionary Movement, the Men and Religion Forward Movement, and to a very limited extent in the Interchurch World Movement, not to mention all kinds of local interchurch projects. Many Associations had been the only organizations that possessed the confidence of all the churches sufficiently to sponsor successfully the organization of a Federation. Now the Associations found themselves in a much more restricted relation to the churches, and one

that tended to become still more restricted as the Federation developed ability to do those things that its nature destined it to do. Not infrequently, those Y.M.C.A. secretaries who had been most closely related to the churches continued to be called upon and to serve the churches, without anyone's giving particular thought as to whether their service was under Association or Federation auspices. But when those individuals were removed from the scene, there became evident to discerning persons how great a change had taken place in the Association's relation to the churches. Unfortunately, many ministers and church laymen did not realize just what had happened, and so criticized the new secretaries and the Association for not being as co-operative as in the past.

The number of communities in which Church Federations had been organized by 1925 was relatively small, but the number steadily increased. One limitation was that the services of a professional executive, for at least half time, appeared to be essential to the success of a Federation. Sometimes a Y.M.C.A. secretary divided his time between the two organizations. Then the relations between churches and Association were likely to be intimate. Very often a local Ministers' Union performed many of the functions of a Federation. In such cases a Y.M.C.A. secretary quite commonly served as secretary and executive, the situation differing from earlier periods only in that the disposition toward interchurch co-operation that had given rise to Federations led the Ministers' Unions to undertake more extensive programs.

While in the cities the Y.M.C.A.'s generally encouraged the formation of Federations or Councils of Churches, in the universities the Associations, in the period under consideration (1919 to 1925), generally resisted a similar development. They were cordial to conferences of church workers, and even to conferences of all religious workers, for mutual encouragement, counsel, and clearance; but,

as a rule, the Associations insisted upon continuing to be the interdenominational operative bodies themselves.

One of the phenomena of the post-war period was the unprecedented enrollment in institutions of higher education. By 1925, there were nearly two hundred and fifty thousand students in public colleges and universities (mostly state)—many more than in all the denominational colleges.<sup>3</sup> The major denominations, North and South, were employing about a hundred and fifty men and women as religious workers in the public institutions, but they were concentrated in less than fifty of these hundred and nineteen institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Some of these local student pastors and some of the executives of denominational Boards of Education advocated a type of federated setup that would make plans and execute projects, and in the control of which the church organizations would participate on a basis of equality with the Christian Associations. When the Associations resisted such developments, some church leaders began to advocate an interdenominational federation that would supplant the Associations; or, better still, a reorganization of the Associations themselves into federations of the denominational bodies.

*The Community Organization Movement.* For many years, American social scientists had been observing the pioneer Community Fund in Liverpool, England; and, before the War, a similar experiment had been launched in Cincinnati. Councils of Social Agencies, by that or some other name, had been organized in Chicago, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and a number of other cities. It was the great wartime campaigns and particularly the United War Work Campaign of 1918 (which also financed the local philanthropies in many cities) that really gave birth to

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<sup>3</sup> Porter, David R., *The Church in the Universities* (New York, Association Press, 1925), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

the Community Chests in this country. In 1922, forty-nine such campaigns were known to have been undertaken. By 1925, there were already two hundred and seventeen Community Chests.<sup>5</sup>

In many cities, Y.M.C.A.'s were reluctant to participate in these Chests. One of the reasons given was that the Associations belonged with the Protestant churches and their agencies, rather than with the charitable and social-service agencies. But great community pressure was brought to bear, causing strong Associations to participate even when their own financial interests did not dictate such a course. By 1926, a hundred and forty-eight Associations were participating in Chests.

Exactly what influence Community Chest participation has had upon the relations of Y.M.C.A.'s with the Protestant churches has never been scientifically studied. It is obvious, however, that such participation removes immediate dependence for financial support upon the members of Protestant churches and makes it practically impossible for these church people to register, through their giving, either approval or disapproval of the Association. Furthermore, the close and absorbing relations with the social agencies, including Catholic and Jewish agencies, tends to absorb some of the time and energy previously devoted to maintaining relations with the Protestant churches.

Perhaps the difference in their relation to the churches of Associations in Chests, as contrasted with Associations financing themselves, is best indicated by the experience of the Minneapolis Y.M.C.A. in withdrawing from the Chest in 1922. In that city, when withdrawal from the Community Fund was under consideration, the Y.M.C.A. Committee on Church Relations, upon request of the Board of Directors, called together all the Protestant min-

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<sup>5</sup> Ivan B. Rhodes, *Studies in the Operation of Community Chests and Relation of Young Men's Christian Associations Thereto* (New York, National Council of the Young Men's Christian Associations, 1932), p. 2.

isters of the city. The Board outlined the situation and submitted its recommendation. After full discussion, the ministers unanimously advised the Y.M.C.A. to withdraw from the Chest and *promised their support* by urging their parishioners to contribute. Every year thereafter, a statement has been made in the Sunday morning service of nearly every church in the city preceding the Y.M.C.A. campaign—usually by some young man or boy of the congregation and endorsed by the minister. Under such circumstances, the Church Co-operation Committees of the several branches and of the Metropolitan Board are lively bodies that further good relations and active co-operation in many more matters than just the financial. This case illustrates a relationship between Y.M.C.A.'s and churches in relation to finances that is hardly possible when a Y.M.C.A. is a participant in a Community Chest.

Councils of Social Agencies were organized in many of the cities where Chests were established and also in some other cities. In Chest cities, Y.M.C.A.'s almost universally joined the Councils; and, quite generally, they did so also in other cities. As a rule, the Associations' relations with these Councils were more clearly defined than were their relations with the Councils of Churches. While co-operation with the social agencies had many advantages, the committee work and added responsibilities involved for the general secretaries and some of their associates necessarily encroached upon time formerly given to the Ministers Union, to church and interchurch projects, and to fellowship. Moreover, secretaries found increasingly that they had more interests in common with the social workers than with the ministers; that the former showed more understanding of their jobs, and more appreciation of the program methods in which they were most interested.

Another similar influence diverting secretaries from fellowship with the clergy that was growing during this period arose from the service clubs—Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and others. They were multiplying rapidly in cities of

fifty thousand population or more. With large properties to manage and extensive programs, most general secretaries were considered sufficiently "prominent" to be elected to membership in the Rotary Club, and their associates to some of the newer clubs. All these clubs involved weekly meetings and frequently committee service. In the larger cities, the general secretaries were also becoming members of athletic clubs, university clubs, country clubs, and occasionally even more select clubs. The Ministers' Unions were confronted with hard competition for the secretary's time.

This loss of contact between secretaries and ministers continued and increased during later years, until by 1922 it no doubt contributed to the need for the formal conferences and standing committees recommended by the Commission on the Approach to the Churches. Reliance could no longer be put exclusively upon casual fellowship and tacit understanding. It is worthy of note, also, that various influences in the larger cities were at the same time reducing the fellowship between the rank and file of ministers who were likely to be most active in Ministers' Unions and the leading ministers who were usually appointed by the Y.M.C.A.'s on their Church Co-operation Committees.

*The Interconfessional Development in the Y.M.C.A.*<sup>1</sup> In America, as has been shown, participation in Community

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the word "interconfessional" is subject to somewhat the same difficulty as the use of the word "interdenominational," as applied to the Y.M.C.A. The Y.M.C.A. has at no time or place been an official joint agency or a federation of agencies of the Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. It is not interconfessional in that sense. The term is here used to mean the participation of *individual members* of Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in the privileges, service and control of Y.M.C.A.'s. The writer has been unable to find a word that sharply distinguished between these two concepts. In other references to co-operation between Protestants and Catholics the word "interconfessional" may be used where Catholics would prefer some other term, such as "intecredal," which would convey to them a more sharply delimited meaning.

Chests and Councils of Social Agencies brought the Associations into co-operative relations with Catholic (and also with Jewish) social agencies, and brought Association secretaries and laymen into increasing fellowship with Catholic priests and laymen. Following the war, a group of Catholic laymen, in the spirit of fairness, publicly defended the Y.M.C.A. against the criticism of its war work. Meanwhile, the proportion of Catholics in the Association membership had been increasing. The expanding community programs brought the Associations into relations with Catholic neighborhoods. Many Catholics were working on the "Y" service and program committees, especially in the East and Middle West; and many Associations were availing themselves of the 10 per cent clause in the membership legislation of the International Convention of 1922, to elect Catholics to their boards.

In the foreign field, also, developments were taking place that broadened the relations of the Associations. The third secretary to go abroad was Myron A. Clark, sent to Brazil in 1891; and work was started in the Argentine by B. A. Shuman in 1901. Organization had followed in Uruguay (1909), Chile (1912), and Peru (1920). Prior to World War I, however, all of these Associations served primarily Americans and Protestant Europeans or evangelical natives. When the war caused European young men (1914) and later Americans (1917) to be called home, the decline in membership led the Associations to turn their attention to the indigenous young men and boys. These indigenous youth were nearly all Catholics, at least nominally. While the Catholic hierarchy opposed the Y.M.C.A., the laity welcomed it with enthusiasm. Co-operation with the Roman Catholic Church itself, of course, could not be established under such circumstances, but the strictly evangelical Protestant character of the Y.M.C.A. proved embarrassing in working with Catholic laymen. Because of this, already in 1914 the Continental Convention of Y.M.C.A.'s in South America, after discussions with the



missionary representatives of the Protestant churches, had broadened the membership basis so that Catholics might vote and hold office. After the war, the preponderance of natives in the Association membership continued and participation of Catholic laymen in the Association management increased.

The official neutrality of the Y.M.C.A.'s was the occasion for some tension between the Associations and some of the Protestant missionary leaders. Nevertheless, in all the countries the fellowship of the American secretaries with the Protestant missionary groups was intimate and helpful.

In the Philippine Islands, where the Y.M.C.A. was established soon after the Spanish-American War, Catholics were for the first time, by specific provision, admitted to voting membership and eligibility to governing boards by personal subscription to the Paris Basis of the World Alliance of Y.M.C.A.'s.<sup>1</sup> By 1925, the Philippine Movement was very successful; it had a number of branches and had already erected at least three specially designed Y.M.C.A. buildings.

As a result of the American Y.M.C.A.'s service to the Allied armies, the Association was invited by high officials of both Catholic and Orthodox countries of Europe to establish its organization in those countries. The most significant development was in Poland, where, under the influence of powerful Catholic laymen, the opposition of the Church hierarchy was gradually relaxed. First tolerance and later acquiescence was accorded the Association, which was recognized to be filling a need that the Catholic Church was not filling. As in Latin America, the Y.M.C.A.

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<sup>1</sup> The basis of active membership in the Philippine Y.M.C.A. is as follows:

"Any men of good moral standing, eighteen years of age or over, belonging to the Roman Catholic, Independent, Protestant, or any other Christian Church, may become active members in this Association by declaring that, believing in God and in Jesus Christ as their Savior according to the Holy Scriptures, they desire to be disciples of Jesus Christ in their doctrines and in their life and to associate their efforts for the extension of His kingdom among young men."

adopted a broader basis of membership here than had previously prevailed in the United States and Canada. The Polish Movement was built within a Catholic framework and was controlled entirely by Polish Catholic laymen. Under the leadership of Paul Super, as national secretary, the Polish Y.M.C.A. had made extraordinary progress by the close of this period. It continued with great vigor up to the subjugation of Poland by Germany (1939) and has shown its amazing vitality since then by its service to the Polish army units, as well as to prisoners and refugees in fourteen different countries.

At this point, attention should be called to a "Letter of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office," dated November 5, 1920, and signed by R. Cardinal Merry del Val, secretary, which received wide publicity at the time. This letter, addressed to local ordinaries, accused "certain newly formed non-Catholic organizations" of turning youth "away from the teaching authority of the Church, the divinely established beacon of truth, and persuading them to seek in the depths of their own consciousness, and hence, within the narrow range of human reason, the light which is to guide them." It stated that chiefly students were being drawn "into such snares" and referred by name to the Y.M.C.A., specifically to a published pamphlet of the Rome Y.M.C.A. It also condemned publications of the Italian Federation of Students for Religious Culture and of the Italian Baptist churches. While it spoke in complimentary terms of the "efficient service in various lines of beneficence" of these non-Catholic organizations, it nevertheless appealed to the Catholic churches to "preserve Catholic young men from the contagion spread abroad by these organizations" and to "arm with Christian spirit and vigor the societies of young men and young women which are already established, and to organize others of the same kind."

In 1922, Bishop M. F. Fallon of London, Ontario, wrote a pamphlet enlarging upon this letter which was distrib-

uted at a Knights of Columbus Convention held in Atlantic City, in August of that year. Whether deliberately or not, the Bishop gave the impression that the letter had been aimed at the Y.M.C.A. much more directly than a careful reading of the text would indicate. The later course of the Vatican, however, did not confirm this impression. Nevertheless, it should be made clear that the Roman Catholic Church has never, by official act, approved or offered assistance to the Y.M.C.A.

As time went on, the participation of Catholic laymen steadily increased in all the countries named, as well as in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. The opposition of the hierarchy gradually became less vocal, and here and there a local priest co-operated in some of the activities.

Relations with the Russian Orthodox Church had been established prior to 1901, as previously mentioned, and Imperial permission to establish Associations throughout Russia had been granted in 1916. During World War I, the Y.M.C.A. ministered to three million Russian soldiers in prison camps. It also began service to the Russian armies at widely distributed centers, which was brought practically to an end by the Bolshevik Revolution and its immediate consequences in December, 1917. Further co-operation was given to the relief work in Russia. The fact of importance to this discussion is that, in all these undertakings, there appears to have been cordial co-operation on the part of the clergy of the Russian Church. In 1920, under G. S. Phelps' direction, Frederick Charles Meredith, a priest of the American Episcopal Church, visited several bishops of the Russian Church in Siberia and was cordially received. The hostility of the Russian Government, however, presently abolished the Y.M.C.A. from Russia. After the war, the Y.M.C.A. directed a definite program for Russian refugees in France, Manchuria, America, and other parts of the world. Probably the most significant item has been the financial support of the Theological Academy of the Russian Orthodox Church in Paris.

The Y.M.C.A. work begun in Turkey in 1910 by D. A. Davis and E. O. Jacobs was mainly among the various Eastern church groups. It involved the opening of relationships with the patriarchs of all these Orthodox Churches, whose headquarters were in Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. Overtures initiated at the beginning of Y.M.C.A. work in Bulgaria, Greece, Jugoslavia, and Roumania, which led to the conducting by Dr. Mott of three series of formal conferences with the church authorities of these four Balkan states and of the scattered Russians, within little more than a decade resulted in the establishment of relations with those churches quite comparable to relations between the Y.M.C.A. and the Protestant churches in America.

Thus, in 1926, when the World Conference of Y.M.C.A.'s met in Helsingfors, Finland, for the first time since World War I, it was an *interconfessional* conference. There were present as delegates not only laymen of the Orthodox churches, but also a number of priests, bishops, and an archbishop. There were Catholic laymen from practically all Roman Catholic countries where the Association was established. When Holy Communion was celebrated, it was administered by bishops of the Anglican, Lutheran, and Orthodox Churches, serving together. The Roman Catholic delegates, though not actual participants in the sacrament—most of them having attended mass at their own church at an earlier hour—were sympathetic members of the congregation.

This event symbolized the greatest rapprochement of any two of the three great confessions of Christianity in a thousand years; and it had been brought about by the Young Men's Christian Association, a lay organization in whose fellowship members of all three confessions had become accustomed to co-operate. The interconfessional character of this Conference made a profound impression upon the delegates from North America. Moreover, since the national movements that had brought this intercon-

fessional characteristic into the World Alliance had all been established and developed through the co-operation of the North American Associations, the logic of broadening relationships at home was very evident.

*The Ecumenical Movement.* At the same time, the churches themselves were making considerable progress toward ecumenical unity. Indeed, since 1910, the International Missionary Council, representing national groups of Churches, of which Dr. John R. Mott had been president from its beginning, had been stimulating and expressing the Ecumenical Movement among Protestant Churches.

In 1925, the Conference on Life and Work met at Stockholm, Sweden, with representatives of Protestant and Orthodox Churches present. Progress in understanding was achieved, but not to the point of celebrating Holy Communion together. The Conference on Faith and Order, which met at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1927, also registered achievement, although progress in the areas of its concern was more difficult.

Through most of its history—particularly through the World Alliance, the foreign work of the American Associations, and the World Student Christian Federation—the Y.M.C.A. had exercised a strong influence in this Ecumenical Movement of the churches. Nevertheless, local Associations in America were hardly aware as yet of these worldwide developments that were tending to make their church affiliations more inclusive. In the Constitutional Convention of 1923, however, there was considerable sentiment for broadening further the basis of voting membership; but in the interests of harmony, it was decided to leave with the International Convention (U.S.A. and Canada) the responsibility for determining that basis.

## Summary

When the National Council and its Counseling Commission of the Churches began to function, late in 1924,

they were confronted with a situation far more complicated than they realized. The relationships of the Associations and local churches had become greatly diversified with the multiplying activities of both. Other agencies serving the churches were actual, though not unfriendly, competitors of the Associations. Relationships between the national organizations of the Associations and of the churches had become numerous and complicated; moreover, they had not received nearly so much study as had local relationships. Many churches were suffering from a great internal Fundamentalist-Modernist theological controversy, which had its repercussions upon their relationships with the Y.M.C.A. Thus the prevailing atmosphere was not congenial to the central objective that the Y.M.C.A. and the churches held in common. This was primarily responsible for the many instances of mutual criticism. At the same time, both the Y.M.C.A. and the denominations had been pushing ambitious plans of expansion in various phases of their work, sometimes threatening competition.

Simultaneously, four great developments were in process, all of which were profoundly affecting the future setting of Y.M.C.A.-Church relations; the Federation Movement among the Protestant churches; the Community Organization Movement among social agencies; the Interconfessional development in the Y.M.C.A.; and the Ecumenical Movement among the churches.

## CHAPTER X

# Relations in Local Communities (1925 to 1944)

**T**HE SITUATION, AS DESCRIBED IN the last chapter, called for the intensification of Y.M.C.A. co-operation with the Protestant churches at the same time that the Association was finding its way in wider church relationships. For that purpose the establishment of the General Counselling Commission of the Churches was considered to be of major importance.

### General Counselling Commission of the Churches

The General Counselling Commission of the Churches was composed of representatives of denominations officially appointed by their highest authorities. Eventually twenty-one denominations appointed commissioners, and the Federal Council was represented by its general secretary. With one exception, the commissioners were all clergymen. It was really an exceptional group. The Commission was related directly to the General Board of the National Council. Dr. John R. Mott gave the Commission as much personal attention, until his retirement in November, 1928, as his many other responsibilities would permit. Dr. David G. Latshaw, a minister, was appointed secretary, and gave his whole time to the Commission and the Department of Relations to Churches and Interchurch Bodies, which was set up in 1925.

The Counselling Commission met annually for one day, and its meetings were well attended. It sent one or more representatives to each meeting of the National Council.

At the first meeting of the Commission, Dr. Mott made a notable statement of his conception of the essential relation of the Associations and the churches.<sup>1</sup> At all of the meetings, much time was devoted to acquainting the commissioners with the work and plans of the Associations, and of the General Board and its subdivision. Usually at least one investigation of some pertinent subject was reported, and several secretaries always made statements. Comment and discussion were invited, and the individual commissioners responded freely. Seldom, if ever, did the Commission take formal action in giving counsel to the General Board or National Council.

The agenda of the Counselling Commission was always crowded, but from the minutes one gets the impression of inconclusiveness in nearly all discussions. Reflecting upon the issues that were being created in regard to Y.M.C.A.-Church relations by the developments described in previous pages, it appears now that the Commission was called upon to consider details and incidental matters, rather than fundamental issues. For example, it never gave any thoroughgoing consideration as to what status the Y.M.C.A. should seek for itself in a closely federated Protestantism or as to a more precise definition of the Association's functions in that relationship, either locally or nationally. Nor was there any discussion, more than incidental, of the relations then developing with the Eastern Orthodox Churches in Europe or with Catholics in Latin America and Europe, and the implications of these developments for the Y.M.C.A.-Church relations of the future. There was no discussion of the Ecumenical Movement; nor were the implications of the Community Organization Movement and the increasing identification of the Y.M.C.A. with the

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the First Annual Meeting of the General Counselling Commission of the Churches* (1924), pp. 5 to 8. Substantially the same thought was expressed by Dr. Mott in a more extended address, in 1921, printed in pamphlet form under the title, *The Young Men's Christian Association and the Evangelical Churches*.



social agencies studied. It dealt only incidentally with the Association's relation to denominational Boards or Councils of such boards. In short, the Counselling Commission did not concern itself about the place and relationships of the Association Movement among other great movements, but gave its attention to the relations between local Y.M.C.A.'s and local churches or local church clubs in universities.

The commissioners did, however, receive a great deal of information about the Associations that apparently was often quite surprising to them and often very gratifying, which was passed on to their church constituencies through reports to denominational conventions, articles in their denominational papers, distribution of printed matter, public address, conference, and various other methods. On occasion, descriptions were given to the Counselling Commission of local situations that were considered by National Council executives to approach the ideal—for example, Minneapolis; Ridgewood, New Jersey; and Mineola, Long Island.

The Commission sponsored two valuable studies, one on the *Relations between Churches and Y.M.C.A.'s in Small Cities* and the other on *Church-Association Co-operation in Recreation*. (The findings will be reviewed in later pages.) It also sponsored a Conference on Church-Y.M.C.A. Co-operation in Recreation. Other studies and other conferences were considered, but money was not available for the purpose.

The Commission gave some informal advice to officers of the General Board. It doubtless had considerable value as a *symbol* of relationship with the churches, and it was *available* for the consideration of major developments and changes in policy of the Association Movement.

Dr. Latshaw retired January 1, 1930, and no successor was appointed. The Y.M.C.A. and the churches were in the throes of the great depression. The Commission was continued on paper for a period of five years. In 1933,

the National Council's Commission of Relations to the Churches recommended that the Counselling Commission be requested to sponsor or co-operate in certain studies.<sup>2</sup> A year later, the same Commission recommended that the National Council, in consultation with denominational leaders, review the functions of the Counselling Commission and seek, through the latter or in other ways, to provide for such formal review of Church-Association official relationships as would insure mutual understanding and official co-operation.<sup>3</sup> But because, in the depth of the great depression, there appeared to be no money to finance further meetings, work or even executive leadership, the Counselling Commission was discontinued at the end of 1934, thereby ending an important experiment in developing for the National Y.M.C.A. a means of direct and systematic consultation with the denominations. Nevertheless, as one looks back upon this attempt at formal consultation with the denominations, the Y.M.C.A. deserves credit for anticipating oncoming problems and for taking the initiative to meet them.

### Y.M.C.A.-Church relations in small cities

The two studies sponsored by the Counselling Commission were made in 1927. This was five years after the last survey of co-operation between Y.M.C.A.'s and churches in local communities, reported in previous pages. The principal findings are therefore given here. The study on *Relations between Churches and Y.M.C.A.'s in Small Cities* was made by David G. Latshaw and Frank Ritchie, and the questionnaires returned were analyzed by Dr. Goodwin Watson. The investigation pertained to cities of from five

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<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Commission of Co-operation among Associations with the Churches* (1933), mimeographed, on file in the National Council library, New York City.

<sup>3</sup> *The Y.M.C.A. and the Churches—a Report on Y.M.C.A. Relations with Churches to the 1934 Meeting of the National Council*, p. 14. Mimeographed; on file in the National Council library, New York City.

to twenty-five thousand population. Returns were received from general secretaries and pastors in approximately two hundred cities out of the three hundred and forty of that size then having Y.M.C.A.'s. All major regions were represented, and there was remarkably close agreement between the replies given by the hundred and ninety-four secretaries and the four hundred and seventy-five pastors. "All secretaries and 95 per cent of the pastors reported the relations of Association and church to be distinctly friendly."<sup>4</sup>

Less than 25 per cent of the Associations were reported as helping the churches to organize and conduct men's Bible classes, or to organize and conduct their own teachers' training classes. Less than 40 per cent were co-operating in weekday religious instruction; providing group Y.M.C.A. membership for organized church groups; or systematically relating Y.M.C.A. members, including dormitory men, to churches. More than 50 per cent, however, were organizing and conducting community boys' meetings and conferences for churches; working with churches in evangelistic campaigns and pre-Easter meetings; making camp equipment available to organized church groups; and assisting churches in general recreation and social activities. And 80 per cent or more were organizing and conducting church recreational leagues, such as baseball and swimming leagues; promoting Father and Son Week for and by the churches; and making building equipment available to organized church and Sunday School groups. It is noteworthy that the last five types of assistance, in which the large majority of Associations were engaged, all were related to church program, were of a recreational character, and had potential character development value. The other types of assistance, provided by more than half

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<sup>4</sup>*Relations between the Churches and the Y.M.C.A.'s in the Small Cities* (1927), p. 12. On file in the National Council library, New York City.

of the Associations, were of a promotional or organizing character.

Even with all this great volume of helpful service to the churches, it is significant that only 41 per cent of the secretaries and 34 per cent of the pastors reported that the Associations were "making provision for stated and regular conferences on Y.M.C.A. program with local pastors." Presumably, there was conference with individual pastors about co-operation with their churches; but apparently the great majority of Associations decided for themselves upon the type and volume of assistance they would give the churches, as well as upon the character of programs the Associations would operate under their own auspices.

Criticism of such lack of systematic conference is tempered in the mind of one who has had much experience in such matters, however, by the knowledge of how laborious and often how fruitless may be such "stated and regular conference." Nevertheless, it is to be observed that only 40 per cent of these Associations had a "definite method of relating Y.M.C.A. membership to churches" and only 29 per cent provided "group Y.M.C.A. membership for organized church groups," two types of assistance that earlier studies had revealed as ranking very high in the desires of pastors.

The other study, *Church-Association Co-operation in Recreation*, also revealed almost universal assistance to churches in one form of recreation or another. That study was based upon replies from a hundred and eighty-six Y.M.C.A.'s representing cities of all sizes. Those Associations reported, on the average, such co-operation with 78 per cent of the Protestant churches in their communities. Nearly two thirds of the Associations reported that "the churches were increasingly looking to the Y.M.C.A. to furnish leadership in their recreational activities."

Both studies revealed a great amount of service by Y.M.C.A. secretaries in the churches to which they be-

longed. Practically all who had been in the communities long enough to make church connections were members of local churches. In the small cities, five hundred and six secretaries held eight hundred and twenty-three service positions. Of those positions, 9 per cent were Sunday School superintendents, 10.5 per cent musical services, 20 per cent club leaders, 21.3 per cent church officials, and 39.2 per cent Sunday School teachers. Among the physical directors covered in the second study, it appeared that about 75 per cent occupied service positions. The proportion of church officials was somewhat less than in the small-city secretariat; that of Sunday School teachers and club leaders, somewhat larger.

In the small-city study, the pastors were asked to write letters, outlining "the principal difficulties in church and Y.M.C.A. co-operation." To this request, one hundred and ninety-nine responded out of the five hundred and twenty returning the questionnaire. Despite the request for "difficulties" only, "one-half of the statements in these letters reported favorably on some degree of positive co-operation between the Y.M.C.A. and churches, and one-fifth reported the co-operation as being the maximum or the best possible under the conditions." But half of the statements were critical, even though sometimes paired off in the same letters with compliments. Of these *negative criticisms*, 20 per cent said the Y.M.C.A.'s were inefficient; 20 per cent said the Y.M.C.A.'s purposes and program were narrow and selfish; 8 per cent objected to the religious beliefs of Y.M.C.A. secretaries; 14 per cent criticized the Y.M.C.A. for lack of religious aims or religious work; 18 per cent reported the Association to be a competitor of the churches; and 16 per cent claimed that the Church and Y.M.C.A. are opposed to each other in their basic aims or religious assumptions. This last and most unfavorable criticism came almost wholly from Lutherans and Episcopalians; 23 per cent of the Lutheran pastors and 12 per cent of the Episcopalian rectors expressing this view.

There appeared to be some other differences in the characteristic attitudes of ministers of different denominations, but a reading of the critical statements, while holding in mind the other facts revealed by the study, gives the definite impression that the great difference was, not between the denominations, but between the Y.M.C.A.'s in different cities. The total impression from this study is as follows:

1. In small cities, the typical Y.M.C.A. was generally exerting itself within the limits of its resources to assist the churches, in their programs for young men and boys, in ways of its own choosing.

2. The attitude of pastors varied somewhat depending on their denomination.

3. The problem of Y.M.C.A.-Church co-operation, as well as that of the Y.M.C.A.'s own program, was largely a problem of secretarial personnel.

4. Friendly relations, which were prevalent, were not synonymous with well-balanced and fruitful co-operation.

In 1925, the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s published a "Community Message to the Brotherhood" entitled *The Church and the Y.M.C.A.*, in which were described specific examples of co-operation between Y.M.C.A.'s and churches in local communities that were regarded as desirable by the National Office. A type of partnership between churches and Y.M.C.A. in boys' work in a large city was illustrated by Boston. The close organization and integration of the Protestant forces of a city of four hundred thousand population, involving the great majority of the local churches, the several Y.M.C.A. branches, the district Councils of Churches, the Sunday School Association, the metropolitan offices of the two Christian Associations, and the city-wide Council of Churches, was illustrated by Minneapolis. Close co-operation in a smaller city was illustrated by Akron, Ohio; co-operation between Negro churches and the Y.M.C.A. in

smaller cities by Wichita, Kansas; relationships in a Southern industrial town by Schoolfield, Virginia, and in rural districts by Tulare County, California. Better than any general statements, these descriptions of specific situations reveal to both church and Y.M.C.A. leaders of the present day the ideals and some of the most satisfactory achievements of that period (1925).

### Survey of relations in 1934

In 1934, another survey of Y.M.C.A.-Church relations in local communities was made—a survey much more expertly planned and executed, and much more comprehensive than those just reviewed. It was made under the direction of a Commission on Relations to the Churches appointed by the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s, under the chairmanship of Percy B. Williams, general secretary at Toledo, Ohio.<sup>5</sup>

Jay A. Urice served as counselor to the Commission and analyzed the replies to the questionnaire, which was the principal method of investigation. This questionnaire was addressed to Y.M.C.A.'s only. A careful sampling of Associations was made, involving 240 Associations, of which 217 supplied information. County, Railroad, Army and Navy, and Student Associations were included, but 209 of the 240 were City Associations.

It was found that one of every four Associations co-operated, at least to some limited extent, with *every* Protestant church in its community; and that two out of five co-operated with more than three fourths of the Protestant churches. The extent of co-operation varied with the size of the community, the proportion of churches reached

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<sup>5</sup> Members of the Commission: Percy B. Williams, chairman; W. W. Dillon; W. A. Luke; F. O. Koehler; O. R. Magill; E. H. T. Foster; Robert H. Scott; A. M. Pennybacker; Robert L. Moore; S. P. Alden; S. Wirt Wiley; S. H. Hankins; W. W. Adair; John E. Manley; Francis Harmon; and F. A. Jackson.

usually diminishing as the size of the cities increased beyond fifty thousand population.

It was interesting to find the Protestant Episcopal and the United Lutheran Churches now among the six denominations supplying the largest number of co-operating churches. About one in every twelve Associations was also co-operating with one or more Catholic churches or Jewish synagogues. The Commission's report further stated that:<sup>6</sup>

In response to the request to choose from among their co-operative enterprises with the churches the one or more which they considered most outstanding, 180 Associations [among 217] reported a total of 340 such relationships. [50 Associations reported three outstanding relationships, 110 reported two, 180 reported one].

The most significant finding of the analysis of these outstanding relationships is the fact that again athletics is most frequently reported. Of all the relationships reported, 71, or a fifth, had to do with athletics.

Religious activities were reported second in frequency. These have to do primarily with Holy Week services and meetings in shops and theatres, evangelistic efforts and union services at Thanksgiving, Christmas and other times; also with evangelistic campaigns, year-round shop meetings, radio programs, special religious emphases such as Week of Prayer. Forty-three outstanding co-operative enterprises of this type were reported.

Educational efforts were reported third in frequency. Leadership training conferences, schools, institutes, etc., are most prominent in this group; also, researches and surveys conducted, religious education through the conduct of Daily Vacation Bible Schools, Bible classes, Sunday Schools of the air and forums, discussion groups, meetings. These various types were reported a total of 39 times.

Boys' work activities were reported fourth in frequency, a total of 32 times. These include a variety of organized groups, both in the building and in the community, older boys' conferences, boys' committees, councils and camps.

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<sup>6</sup> The following quotations are from *The Y.M.C.A. and the Churches*, report of the Commission on Relations to the Churches (1934). On file in the National Council library, New York City.



Adult activities, reported 17 times, include fellowship groups, mixed groups for social gatherings, choral groups, groups for church officials, for young married people and for special constituencies, e.g., navy chaplains, soldiers, railroad men and their families.

Father and son activities, which, it will be remembered, were reported second in frequency among all those undertaken by Associations and churches, were reported only 15 times as an outstanding co-operative project. Only 15 of the 99 Associations promoting father and son activities considered them an outstanding enterprise.

Other activities conducted with local churches that the Associations considered outstanding were "young people's, special emphases, prohibition efforts, and unemployment efforts." There was reported a very extensive use of Y.M.C.A. facilities by church groups in 40 per cent of the communities. Many Y.M.C.A.'s were also utilizing church facilities. Jointly, some were also finding other equipment in which to carry on their activities.

There was a difference between small communities and large ones in the character of the co-operation, as there was in the proportion of the churches co-operating. The Commission pointed out that:

The Y.M.C.A. in the smaller community is in essence a service station—a good place to go to get help on any matter. As such it has something to give to every minister of every church. With the increasing acceleration of all activity in modern life, there are increasing demands upon the Associations to serve the churches along these lines. [But] only the most incidental references are made by smaller Associations to the opportunities presented for concerted attack upon the problems of the religious education of youth in the community. . . . In larger city Associations there is likely to be less frequent evidences of Association-Church co-operation but, in the opinion of the secretaries reporting, they become more meaningful when they do appear.

More than 80 per cent of the secretaries were actively engaged in some phase of church work. These 717 men held a total of 2,470 service positions. This was a record

of still greater service in their own churches by secretaries than was revealed in the study of small cities in 1927.

### **Trends in Y.M.C.A.-Church relations from 1909 to 1934**

There has not been another nation-wide survey of Y.M.C.A.-Church relations in local residential communities since 1934. It seems desirable, therefore, to summarize the changes that had taken place in those relations over a period of twenty-five years.

Certain trends are clearly discernible in the types of activities by means of which the Associations co-operate with the churches, when one compares the reports made by the Employed Officers' Association Commission in 1909; the Commissions reporting to the International Convention in 1913, 1919, and 1922; the studies made under the auspices of the General Counselling Commission of the Churches in 1927, and the report of the Commission on Relations to the Churches to the National Council in 1934.

Whereas in 1909 the major method of co-operation was still to feed young men into church membership after they had come under the influence of the Associations' activities, by 1934 the major method was to assist the churches in their own programs for young men and boys. Whereas in 1909 the principal emphasis was upon assistance to adult groups, especially men's Bible classes and brotherhoods, by 1934 these movements had waned, and help was being given mainly in relation to boys and youth organizations. In 1909, co-operation was chiefly in relation to specifically religious activities; by 1934, recreational activities topped the list. As a rule, the Councils of Religious Education had taken over all assistance in matters of Bible courses and Sunday School teacher-training, and the churches looked to Y.M.C.A.'s for help in group work and athletics, and for leadership training. The occasional use of Y.M.C.A. institutional facilities by church groups in 1909 had grown into the church group-membership plan,

church groups in "Y" camps, and the use of church institutional facilities by Y.M.C.A.'s in their community programs. Whereas in 1909 the promotional genius of the Y.M.C.A. was to the fore, in 1934 program building and supervision were its outstanding contributions.

Only a few of the earlier types of co-operation had been discontinued; new types had been added. The most striking change in the relations with local churches during these twenty-five years had been the great increase in the number of forms of co-operation. In spite of the effects of the great depression, which was then at its low point, three fourths of the Associations reporting in 1934 cited evidence of increasing co-operation and improved spirit.

In 1909, most general secretaries were members of the local Ministerial Association; thirteen out of seventy Associations were reported to hold an advisory relation to a laymen's federation, and there were only half a dozen local Church Federations in existence. By 1934, three fourths of the Associations in the sampling studied maintained relationships with from one to ten co-operative agencies of the churches in the community. The proportion of general secretaries who were active in Ministerial Associations had declined a little (to 85 per cent), but Ministerial Associations still headed the list of co-operating inter-church agencies.

According to volume and interest, co-operative activities engaged in with all agencies combined ranked as follows: conferences, retreats, evangelistic campaigns, inter-church athletics, prohibition efforts, leadership coaching, teacher training, Daily Vacation Bible Schools, war and peace efforts, community surveys, unemployment relief, interracial relations, religious meetings in shops, civic reforms, week-day religious education, religious broadcasts, Speakers Bureaus, vice abatement, vocational guidance, employment bureaus, and Americanization classes. It was reported that in many communities co-operation formerly

given to the local churches, directly or through temporary movements frequently initiated by the Y.M.C.A., had come to be rendered co-operatively with or through other federated agencies of the churches.

The activities carried on most frequently with the Ministerial Associations were evangelistic campaigns; with Church Federations, civic reforms and prohibition efforts; with Religious Education Councils, Daily Vacation Bible Schools and leadership coaching; with Young People's Federations and Youth Councils, conferences and retreats.<sup>7</sup>

### **Progress of local church federation and community organization**

The organization of new Councils of Churches<sup>8</sup> continued at a rapid rate during the later 1920's. It was slowed down seriously by the depression, but was never wholly stopped. In 1943, there were thirty state and three hundred and twenty-one local Councils of Churches. There were also ten additional state organizations, such as Sunday School Associations, Councils of Religious Education, and Missions Councils. There were eight hundred independent County Councils of Religious Education. In addition, there were some 1,410 Ministers' Unions.<sup>9</sup> Federal Council officials reported that a large and increasing number of these unions, especially in smaller cities, had taken on more and more of the functions of Councils of Churches. The National Council's commission of 1934 also reported the widespread existence of Youth Councils, Young People's Federations, and Church Athletic Associations. The last named alone generally remained dependent upon the Y.M.C.A. for leadership and supervision.

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<sup>7</sup> See *Report of Study of Church Relations* (New York, National Council Y.M.C.A., 1934), pp. 15 to 20.

<sup>8</sup> The terms Church Federation and Council of Churches are here used as synonymous. The latter term has come to be the more generally used in local communities.

<sup>9</sup> See *Forward Together—American Co-operative Christianity* (New York, Federal Council of Churches, 1943), pp. 82 to 94.

Two developments that have characterized local Councils of Churches during recent years have been:

1. The merging of Religious Education Councils into the Councils of Churches and the drawing of the other federated organizations into as close systematic affiliation to the Councils as possible. As a rule, the affiliation of the federated organizations has been essentially different from the affiliation of the "non-denominational" Christian Associations. Yet both the women's and youth federations have jealously preserved a large degree of independence.

2. The stimulation of and participation in interfaith movements of various sorts, involving the Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the Jews. In this development the Christian Associations have generally co-operated; but, except in educational institutions, the initiative has generally been taken by the Councils of Churches. Interfaith Councils exist in many universities and in an increasing number of cities.

The most significant local co-operation of the Y.M.C.A.'s with the Catholic Church and with the Jews has been through the Councils of Social Agencies, with the Catholic and Jewish youth-serving agencies. Following World War I, the establishment of youth organizations was greatly accelerated among both Catholics and Jews. In many cities, both erected buildings comparable to those of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. but co-educational in their arrangement. Increasing co-operation has developed between the Christian Associations and these organizations. In a few communities, all these youth-serving agencies and the Protestant Youth Councils have entered into co-operative arrangements to serve some interests of youth, such as social recreation.

The Community Organization Movement has continued to develop and spread since 1925. By 1943, the number of Community Chests had increased to seven hundred and the number of Councils of Social Agencies to two hundred

and ninety-six. Four fifths of the Y.M.C.A.'s in Community Chest cities were then participants in the Chests. The prevalence of such participation had been much increased by financial difficulties encountered during the great depression. Under the stimulation and guidance of the National Council of Community Chests and Councils and the influence of the Community Organization section of the National Conferences on Social Work, local community social planning has been increasing, involving both private and public agencies. In such planning, the Christian Associations and the Catholic and Jewish agencies have all been active participants.

### Relations in the student field

The study made by the National Council's Commission on Relations to the Churches reporting in 1934 included only one Student Y.M.C.A. in its sampling, so that actually no light was thrown upon Y.M.C.A.-Church relations in the universities. However, the Council set up a Commission on Student Work<sup>10</sup> in 1940, which reported in 1941.

Denominational work in universities continued to increase until, in the early 1930's, eleven leading Protestant denominations had in total more paid workers on local campuses than the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. combined.<sup>11</sup> By 1940, these eleven denominations maintained a total of three hundred and fourteen local units that employed pastors or secretaries.<sup>12</sup> Grants-in-aid to these local units from national and regional treasuries then approximated five hundred thousand dollars annually. In only thirty-five out of the 1,009 public and independent institutions, how-

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<sup>10</sup> Members of the Commission: S. Wirt Wiley, chairman; Roy E. Coombs; Charles L. Crumly; Cecil H. Gamble; W. Reading Gebhardt; Rex F. Harlow; Parker P. Jordan; Ralph Waldo Lloyd; Edgar S. Lotspeich; Benjamin E. Mays; Thornton W. Merriam; David Neiswanger, Gren O. Pierrel; and W. A. Smith.

<sup>11</sup> See *What of the Future of Student Y.M.C.A.'s?* report of the Commission on Student Work (New York, Association Press, 1941), p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27

ever, were there as many as three denominational units in 1940 employing full-time workers, while the Y.M.C.A. had local secretaries in more than a hundred institutions. There were also church clubs in many universities where student pastors were not employed, especially Lutheran and Southern Baptist clubs, as there were many Y.M.C.A.'s without secretaries. The expansion of denominational student work practically ceased during the depression and had not yet been resumed in 1940, although by 1944 some of its leaders were saying that it seemed highly probable that in the near future greatly expanded resources would be put into this field by Protestant forces.

Student Y.M.C.A.'s, on the other hand, had declined in number and in the effectiveness of their intercollegiate organization between 1920 and 1935, but by 1940 were regaining strength.<sup>13</sup>

The several denominations had settled down into quite diverse policies and types of work with students. Friendly relations with the denominational organizations had been the rule, but practical co-operation was a different matter from denomination to denomination. The respective functions in university communities of church enterprises and the Christian Associations came to be recognized in practice, although not stated in any mutually accepted formula. The problem of federation had been worked out with great difficulty. When one considers the relatively small number of institutions (thirty-five) employing three or more full-time church workers—and these were the situations where the problem had practical importance—it becomes apparent how geographically limited the problem was. But it was acute.

In 1925, David R. Porter, executive secretary of the Student Department, National Council of Y.M.C.A.'s, published a booklet on *The Church in the Universities*, in which he welcomed and commended the work of the

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14 to 18.

churches. He discussed eight reasons that had been advanced for changing the organizational character of the Y.M.C.A. or substituting for it a federation of church organizations, and propounded fourteen questions raised by such a proposal.<sup>14</sup> He then made a number of proposals calculated to enable Christian Associations to accomplish the ends desired by church workers without changing the Associations into federations or creating a federation including the Association.<sup>15</sup>

Such proposals, when faithfully followed, postponed for a time the creation of federations on many campuses where there were several church workers. On campuses with but a few church workers, the proposals proved a continuing solution. But in most large universities with several denominational student pastors, the agitation continued until some fully representative Religious Council was eventually brought into being, usually with the Y.M.C.A. secretary serving as its executive.

In 1940, Clarence P. Shedd made a survey of the co-operative plans in a hundred and fifty-six colleges which revealed it to be the rule that, where several student religious groups existed, some type of Christian Student Council or Interfaith Council (generally both) bound them together.<sup>16</sup> In the presence of these federations, the Associations have gradually acquiesced in being called "non-denominational," as distinguished from "interdenominational," organizations.

Until recent years, the area of tension was confined to the universities. The Commission on Student Work in 1940 discovered that there had been developing, almost without the National Student Division's being conscious of it, a restlessness among the college administrations of many church-related colleges concerning the Y.M.C.A.'s

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<sup>14</sup> See Porter, David R., *The Church in the Universities* (New York, Association Press, 1925), pp. 40-41 and 42 to 45.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46 to 51.

<sup>16</sup> See *Journal of Bible and Religion* (November, 1940).



role in those institutions. After having depended for years on the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. as the major religious agencies in church-related colleges, in many instances college administrators and denominational Boards of Education began in the early 1920's to restudy the means of religious culture in their colleges and to make additional provisions for such culture. The earlier feeling that the religious character of church-related colleges was a handicap in their competition with state institutions had been replaced by the belief that the contribution such colleges could make to the religion of students constituted their distinctive reason for existence.

In most church-related colleges today, greater attention is being given in the selection of professors to their probable religious influence. A Department of Religion is usually maintained, or at least a number of courses in Bible and other religious subjects are offered; the actual influence of chapel is given more thought; a Religious Emphasis Week or some equivalent is conducted each year; and voluntary religious organizations are given more supervision than formerly. The colleges themselves have taken over many of the services and religious activities for which they formerly depended upon the Christian Associations.

There are marked differences among the policies of the different denominations, especially in regard to voluntary religious organizations. Thus the Southern Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians have their own student organizations, which meet in denominational student conferences; whereas the Northern Baptists, Congregational-Christians, Disciples, Evangelical-Reformed, and Presbyterian (North and South) as a rule do not encourage denominational organizations on their campuses, either their own organizations or those of other denominations. The Methodists, on the other hand, accept definite responsibility for the religious nurture of all students in their colleges, and pursue a policy of administrative supervision and co-ordination of voluntary organ-

izations beyond that of any other denomination. There are also differences between individual colleges of the same denomination.

It has been stated that in few Protestant colleges are more than half the students from the denomination to which the college belongs, and that in colleges in large cities the proportion is as low as 15 or 20 per cent.<sup>17</sup> Thus a denominational program is likely to be limited in its appeal, indicating that the Christian Associations still have an important function to perform. But from what has just been said it is clear that no general pattern of Y.M.C.A. activity fits all the varying situations; a first-rate problem of adaptation is involved. That this adaptation has not been adequate in recent years is evidenced by the fact that the loss of Y.M.C.A.'s in church-related colleges has exceeded the gain.

There are many evidences that the place formerly occupied by the Associations in church colleges has been a very important factor in Church-Y.M.C.A. relations, as well as in the development of both lay and professional leadership for the Associations. The elimination of the Y.M.C.A. from church colleges would probably be a tragedy of the first magnitude.

## Summary

It becomes clear from the record that relations between Y.M.C.A.'s and churches in local communities and on individual campuses have undergone much change during the last twenty years. Whether there is more or less co-operation, it would be impossible to determine. The changes in circumstances and consequently in forms of co-operation make exact comparison impossible. Generally speaking, the churches appear to be less dependent upon the Y.M.C.A.'s than formerly, or at least their dependence is limited to a narrower area of activities and services.

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<sup>17</sup> See *What of the Future of Student Y.M.C.A.'s?* *op. cit.*, p. 23.

Within that narrower area, co-operation appeared in 1934 to be growing in volume and significance in residential communities. There was needed, obviously, a fresh study of these communities on a national scale.

Clearly, co-operation by the Y.M.C.A.'s with the federated agencies of the churches has been taking the place of much direct co-operation with local churches. There has now been enough experience in relationships with these agencies to warrant a careful restudy of the distinctive roles that they and the Y.M.C.A.'s may most helpfully play in the future.

## CHAPTER XI

# National and International Relationships (1925 to 1944)

**L**ET US NOW TURN to relations determined by the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s, and to relations of that body and its subsidiaries to other national and international agencies, organizations, and movements.

### Broadening the membership basis

The issue concerning the basis of voting membership and the definition of "evangelical churches" had been quiescent since the Constitutional Convention of 1923, the heat formerly generated thereby having cooled considerably. No ill effects of the "10 per cent amendment" of 1922<sup>1</sup> had been apparent either in the operation of Associations or in their relations with evangelical churches. As a matter of fact, the committee appointed to study the matter in 1933 found that:

1. The Associations had lost interest in the amendment.
2. The Associations had little zeal in enforcing the concurrent provision that a certain personal confession of faith should be secured from any non-evangelical person elected to a Board of Directors.
3. The National Council had no effective means of checking on local "regularity."

By 1925, state Y.M.C.A. secretaries in New England were reporting that they had for several years been unable to organize any new Associations because of this narrow

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<sup>1</sup> See page 114.

basis of control. The non-evangelical churches were generally included in the Councils of Churches in New England—as, indeed, they were in some other sections. In fact, the Y.M.C.A., instead of being a unifying force among the churches in New England as it had been in earlier days, had become a divisive force, because it had failed to keep pace with the progress of unity among the churches. More and more, in other parts of the country too, it became apparent that the Y.M.C.A.'s definition of an evangelical church no longer described many of the churches with which it had been affiliated from the beginning.

The proportion of Catholic members had continued to increase wherever there was a considerable Catholic population; and especially after World War I the number of Catholics serving on Y.M.C.A. committees and otherwise participating in Association work had greatly increased. Likewise, the appointment by the Greek Orthodox Church of Archbishop Athenagoras, ranking ecclesiastic from Eastern Orthodox countries participating in the World Conference of 1926, to the field of North and South America, stimulated relationships between the Associations and Greek Orthodox Churches in the United States. World Conferences held in America in 1931—one in Toronto, Canada, and the other in Cleveland, Ohio—had accustomed Americans to seeing Orthodox laymen and clergy and Catholic laymen participating in the official counsels of the Association. The sense of the world-wide character of the Y.M.C.A. had been made more vivid in America than ever before. The importance of putting the American Associations on a basis that would not debar from their official fellowship leaders of Associations in other lands had become another argument for a change.

On the basis of the International Convention's action (1931) in committing to the National Councils of the United States and Canada the responsibility for determining their own bases of membership, the National Council (U.S.A.) amended its Constitution in 1933. All the de-

velopments cited in the preceding paragraphs were brought forward by those who sought to exert influence in favor of broadening the basis of control, whereas the inertia of the Movement was expressed in traditional arguments for the old basis.

It is seldom that any one individual has stood out pre-eminently in such decisions by the National organization—except, of course, John R. Mott, who has always been the personification of the Y.M.C.A.'s "unswerving allegiance to the Church," always advocating the most inclusive feasible concept thereof. On this occasion, however, William D. Murray, one of the recognized saints of the Y.M.C.A. and one of the most loyal and indefatigable of churchmen, who through his long life had been a foremost advocate of religious values in the work of the Y.M.C.A. and of co-operation with the churches, and who previously had always been opposed to a change in the evangelical church-membership basis, now championed the broadening of that basis. It was his influence that counteracted all the weight of inertia.

The National Council adopted amendments providing that:

. . . each local Association shall determine the qualifications of its voting members, and of the members of its boards of control, provided such members be in accord with the purposes, ideals, and spirit of the Young Men's Christian Associations [and that members of the National Council] shall be . . . members of a Christian Church and members of a Young Men's Christian Association recognized by the National Council.<sup>2</sup>

In 1939, the then commonly accepted statement of purpose of the Y.M.C.A.'s was incorporated in the Constitution of the National Council. It reads as follows:

The Young Men's Christian Association we regard as being,

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<sup>2</sup> *Report and Legislation of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the National Council (U.S.A.)*, pp. 15 and 16. See Article III, Section 3; and Article VIII, Section 5.

in its essential genius, a world-wide fellowship of men and boys united by a common loyalty to Jesus Christ for the purpose of developing Christian personality and building a Christian society.

The objective of this world-wide fellowship, as here stated, would seem to be in harmony with the purpose of every branch of the Christian Church.

Without in the least abating its loyalty to the Protestant evangelical churches by these actions, the Y.M.C.A. put itself in a position to serve all divisions of the Church Universal and to work in its own peculiar way to bring these divisions together in unity of spirit, purpose, and action. The Association was free to be a "world-wide fellowship of men and boys united by common loyalty to Jesus Christ," more inclusive than any existing federation of churches.

It now remained to be demonstrated that there was resident in the Y.M.C.A. sufficient spiritual dynamic to enable it to perform such an expanded function in relation to the unity of Christendom. That this spiritual dynamic has not been dependent wholly upon the evangelical church-membership basis of control in the American Y.M.C.A.'s is indicated by the experience of the British Associations, which have not had such a membership basis. The British Y.M.C.A.'s have never been second to the American Associations in religious fervor, and recently they have become more intimately affiliated with the Protestant denominations within the British Council of Churches than the Y.M.C.A. in the United States has ever been with the Federal Council.<sup>3</sup> The assurance of the continuing character and growing strength of the Y.M.C.A. resides primarily in the purposes it has persistently held for a hundred years; the organizational habits in which those purposes have been incorporated; and the world-wide organization that has been developed, through which each

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<sup>3</sup> See p. 171.

national unit is reinforced in those purposes by all the others.

### Relations with national social agencies

The Y.M.C.A. is distinguished in its own thinking and apparently in the public mind as a *religious social agency*. The following, and other similar but less formal, relationships serve to identify the Y.M.C.A. with national social agencies:

*National Social Work Council.* Soon after World War I, the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s and national bodies of the other major social agencies formed the National Social Work Council, which has continued through the intervening years to function as a means of conference, of studying the tide of relevant events, and of facilitating co-operative action when such action seemed desirable.

*National Conference on Social Work.* There has also been some participation of Y.M.C.A.'s in the National Conference on Social Work, especially in its Group Work Division.

*National Education-Recreation Council.* In 1933, the National Education-Recreation Council was formed, composed of both voluntary agencies and agencies of the Federal Government actively engaged in recreation and informal education. The National Board of the Y.M.C.A.'s has been an active participant in this Council, which functions as "a conference body of national agencies associated for the purpose of exchanging information and studying common problems."

*Associated Youth-serving Organizations.* In 1943, seven voluntary youth-serving national agencies, after meeting together for many months in conference over mutual interests, set up a corporation known as the Associated Youth-serving Organizations, Incorporated. Members of this corporation are the National Board of the Y.M.C.A.'s,



the National Board of the Y.W.C.A.'s, the Girl Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls, the Boys' Clubs of America, the National Jewish Welfare Board, and the National Federation of Settlements. The purpose of this organization, as stated in the certificate of incorporation, is:

. . . to facilitate responsible consultation among the national bodies of youth-serving organizations regarding their relations to the needs of children and youth, and their relations to each other in serving such groups, and to provide an agency for such joint action in such service as may be determined from time to time.

The aggressive policy of the Federal Government in recent years, in the field of social welfare, has been one influence impelling these agencies toward federation, thus making possible joint action in preserving the peculiar values of voluntary philanthropy.

### Relations with national church agencies

The most important relationships of the Y.M.C.A. with national and international church agencies are as follows:

*International Council of Religious Education.* Active and happy co-operation has continued between the International Council of Religious Education and the Y.M.C.A., particularly in the field of religious education of youth and, to a lesser degree, in religious education of adults. With regard to their respective relations to the denominations, these two organizations appear to have worked out a successful solution at the very beginning. This involved withdrawal of the National Office of the Y.M.C.A. from direct assistance to the churches in the field of religious instruction, which resulted in a curtailment of Y.M.C.A. relations with the churches that seems not to have been offset by increased relations in other aspects of boys work.

*United Christian Youth Movement.* This Movement, with which the International Council of Religious Education and Y.M.C.A. have always co-operated, has developed

as a movement led by youth and guided by the more mature judgment of professional leaders of church and interdenominational agencies to which the participating youth organizations are related. Represented in this body are forty-one denominations, the International Society of Christian Endeavor, the Y.W.C.A., the Y.M.C.A., the Student Volunteer Movement, the Boy Scouts, and the following interchurch agencies: the Federal Council of Churches, the Home Missions Council, the Council of Church Boards of Education, the Missionary Education Movement, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, the World's Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and the International Council of Religious Education, which provides the administration. Three movements within the Y.M.C.A. are members of the United Christian Youth Movement—namely, the Hi-Y Congress, the Young Men's Assembly, and the National Council of Student Christian Associations. The Y.M.C.A. is represented on the Central and Administrative Committees. A representative body within the United Christian Youth Movement, known as the Christian Youth Council of North America, meets biennially and decides upon certain emphases to be recommended to the participating societies in their day-by-day activities. The program emphases for the current biennium (1943-1944) include study and action in four fields: Christian world order; developing community recreation for youth; service to disrupted populations; and adjusting youth programs to present needs. There has been a slow but apparently healthy growth of local Christian Youth Councils, in or with which the local Y.M.C.A.'s co-operate. It was with this organization that the two Christian Associations (Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A.) collaborated in choosing the American delegation to the World Conference of Christian Youth at Amsterdam, Holland, in 1939.

*Council of the World's Student Christian Federation in the U.S.A.* Nationally, relations between the Y.M.C.A.

and the denominational Boards of Education have undergone several stages of development since the Cleveland Conferences of 1915 and 1916. Mutual suspicion gave way, as the federation problem cleared up, to mutual confidence and co-operation, both between the Association and the individual Boards, and between the Association and the University Commission of the Council of Church Boards of Education. There developed then, in the early 1930's, a considerable sentiment in favor of a merger of all denominational and interdenominational organizations into a National Student Christian Movement. A sort of merger took place in the Northeast, except that the two Christian Associations continued to bear the major part of the financial responsibility and to provide professional supervision. By 1940 the impracticability of such a merger on a national scale had become apparent. Instead, there was formed an American Provisional Council of the World's Student Christian Federation, composed of the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the Student Volunteer Movement, and the University Commission of the Council of Church Boards of Education. This gave membership in the World Student Christian Federation, which was previously confined to the Christian Associations, to the church organizations as well. It also provided a potential means of conference, co-ordination, and co-operation among the several members of the Provisional Council. In 1943, this Council achieved a permanent status, and its name was changed to "The Council of the World's Student Christian Federation in the United States."

*Emergency Council on Student Christian Work.* To meet the emergency created by the Army and Navy training programs in the universities and colleges, the national organizations of the Student Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., and University Commission of the Church Boards of Education set up in 1942 the War Emergency Council on Student Christian Work.

*Interreligious Council.* The Emergency Council on

Student Christian Work is further affiliated with the Catholic and Jewish national bodies in the Interreligious Council.

*Foreign Missions Conference of North America.* The International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s has continued to be a full member of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. This is the oldest of all the Association's affiliations with official interdenominational agencies, and it has been one of continuously happy and mutually helpful relations.

*Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.* With the Federal Council of Churches, the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s has continued to have most cordial and co-operative relations, as an affiliated organization. In 1928, the Federal Council celebrated its twentieth anniversary and laid plans for its own reorganization, which took place four years later. The most significant changes pertained to internal organization, with a view to bringing the various commissions under direct and complete control of the Council and its Executive Committee. The functions of the Council's many commissions were redistributed among ten "departments," and its meetings were made biennial instead of quadrennial.

In 1929, an arrangement was arrived at whereby the International Council of Religious Education took over some of the functions of the Federal Council's Commission on Christian Education, and the latter body was discontinued. Increasingly close co-operation has been cultivated among all the official interdenominational agencies, and among those agencies and the Federal Council itself.

When, in 1938, the Syrian Antiochan Orthodox Church was admitted to membership, followed in 1942 by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Council became more than Protestant.

In the area of public affairs, the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s has come in recent years to have much more in common with the Federal Council. Thus, in 1931, the

International Convention and the National Council acted with much greater promptness and unanimity in approving the revision of the Federal Council's "Social Ideals of the Churches" than had the former in regard to the original statement. By 1934, interest in the field of "public affairs" had become such in the Y.M.C.A.'s that the National Council authorized the creation of a Committee on Public Affairs, which has been increasingly influential. In 1942, its recommendation regarding the general war-time emphases in local Associations was adopted by the National Council. These emphases included: focusing normal programs on wartime needs; seeking a basis for a Christian world order; and educating youth and adults for a demonstration at home of Christian democracy. This increasing common interest in public affairs has served to draw the two Councils closer together.

The Federal Council has come to manage the general co-operative projects of the denominations, while the several councils of denominational Boards have handled matters in their particular areas. In 1911, the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s exercised its initiative in launching the Men and Religion Forward Movement; but in 1936 the National Preaching Mission was launched and directed by the Federal Council, and the Y.M.C.A. was represented only on the Laymen's Sponsoring Committee. In earlier years, the National Student Committee of the Y.M.C.A. had projected intercollegiate evangelistic campaigns across the country; but in 1938 it was the Federal Council that took the initiative in setting up the University Christian Mission, under the co-operative auspices of itself, the Council of Church Boards of Education, and the Student Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A.

The work of the Federal Council is done mainly through committees and commissions. The National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s has given active co-operation through the years by making available for working membership on these committees men from its staff who are specialists in

their fields. At present, Y.M.C.A. secretaries are serving on the following committees, among others: Research and Education, International Justice and Good Will, Race Relations, Church and Social Service, Study of Christian Unity, Religion and Health, and Worship. These committeemen are appointed as members of their respective denominations. A representative of the National Council meets with the Executive Committee of the Federal Council, but without the right to vote.<sup>4</sup> The National Council appoints staff members of the Federal Council on certain of its committees. By such means, the respective fields of the two Councils have been progressively defined, and co-operation has been secured in overlapping areas.

The official relationship of the Y.M.C.A. and the Federal Council has never been more clearly defined. Yet the nature of relations between the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s and the Federal Council of Churches is intimately allied with the Association's problem of maintaining, as an independent lay organization, such relationships with the churches that the latter will have confidence in its faithfully representing their interests. Church leaders complain that there is not adequate consultation between the Y.M.C.A. and the denominations. Some question the propriety of the Y.M.C.A.'s ever undertaking to act on behalf of the Protestant churches, without their specific approval individually or as a group. Practically, under present circumstances, the question that logically follows

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<sup>4</sup> The status of this representative derives from the following paragraph in the by-laws of the Federal Council, pertaining to membership of the Executive Committee:

"Section 9. The following shall be invited to attend meetings of the Executive Committee for consultation and advice, but without the right to vote:

"C. Those persons, not to exceed twelve, who may be nominated, one each, by such agencies of organized Christian co-operation as may, by action of the Executive Committee, become enrolled as in affiliated, co-operative or consultive relations with the Federal Council."

is whether the Y.M.C.A. should carry on the desired consultations directly with the denominations or indirectly, through the Federal Council as their agent.

### Church-Y.M.C.A.-U.S.O. relations

The Y.M.C.A. has never presumed to be spokesman for the Protestant Churches; but in light of its historic relationships, it has felt free to undertake services on their behalf within the Association's special field of activity. In particular, the Y.M.C.A. has always assumed a special responsibility for representing the Protestant Churches in service to the armed forces. This was unquestioned in the Spanish-American War; but in World War I, as will be recalled,<sup>5</sup> important problems arose leading to the creation of the General Counselling Commission of the Churches.

At the prospect of the United States participating in World War II, the National Council not only prepared to serve the armed forces in the particulars in which it had developed proficiency, but entered into a co-operative arrangement with five other agencies for the purpose of financing and administering this service. The avowed bond of these agencies—known as the United Service Organizations (U.S.O.)<sup>6</sup>—was their religious interest. The Catholics were represented not by their lay organization, the Knights of Columbus, as in World War I, but by a board newly created for the purpose, known as the National Catholic Community Service and composed of bishops.

Although the Y.M.C.A. assumed that it was representing the interests of the Protestant churches, it had not secured the formal authorization of the denominations, individually or as a group, as it entered into this new and unprecedented arrangement. Hardly had the U.S.O. work got

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<sup>5</sup> See pages 76-82.

<sup>6</sup> Member organizations of the U.S.O. are: the National Catholic Community Service, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Salvation Army, the National Travellers Aid Association, the Y.M.C.A., and the Y.W.C.A.

ten under way when representatives of different denominations began to request special arrangements whereby they might serve their members in U.S.O. buildings. Compliance with such requests was readily worked out. The more crucial issue raised, however, was that the Y.M.C.A. had not included any official representatives of the Protestant churches in appointments to the U.S.O. Board of Directors, on which the Catholic Church was officially represented. In particular the Y.M.C.A. was criticised for allowing the U.S.O. to make certain financial grants to Catholic churches for the use of their properties, when such grants were not being made to Protestant churches.

The Y.M.C.A., no longer having a Counselling Commission of the Churches of its own, soon found itself dealing with its friend, the Federal Council, in working out statements and arrangements acceptable to the denominations. Problems appeared to have been solved, and cordial relations were restored. But in the process the denominations had been further confirmed in their belief, carried over from the last war, that the Y.M.C.A. is prone to assume to act for the churches without due consultation; and the Y.M.C.A. had accepted the necessity of dealing with the denominations as a group, not directly, but through their agent, the Federal Council.

The *Christian Century* demanded editorially by what authority the Y.M.C.A. assumed to represent the Protestant Churches.<sup>7</sup> But the point of view of that journal, it seems safe to assume, was somewhat different from the point of view of the critics representing certain denominations; for the *Christian Century* has been spokesman for those who have advocated church union, as contrasted with federation. Pending actual union, it has stood for a *strong* federation. In other connections, it has urged that:

. . . the Churches think and plan organically with all their resources at their command and with a full sense that what

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<sup>7</sup> *Christian Century* (June 17, 1942).



*is being done is being done on their own initiative and on their responsibility as churches.*<sup>8</sup>

This editorial served to put in sharp relief the fundamental issue that increasingly comes into the open whenever the Y.M.C.A. assumes to act on behalf of the churches. However, a canvass of the denominational publications of twelve of the leading denominations during the period from January to July, 1942, when the Y.M.C.A. and U.S.O. were under discussion, revealed no editorial comment; and only in two periodicals, both of the same denomination, were any letters or articles found dealing with the matters in controversy or reprinting the *Christian Century's* editorial. Apparently, the separate denominations are not raising that issue.

At its regular meeting in May, 1942, the National Board of the Y.M.C.A.'s adopted a statement that had been prepared in consultation with the officers of the Federal Council.<sup>9</sup> After stating that the Y.M.C.A. "had its birth in the evangelical revival" and that it "had continued to find its sustaining life in the Protestant churches," reciting its traditional policy of serving men and boys without regard to race, color, or creed, and calling attention to its current commitment to co-operate with the other organizations in the U.S.O.—Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant—the National Board expressed the wish "to act with and for the Protestant churches (to the extent they desire)" in this service. The Board then outlined certain procedures that had been agreed upon in consultation with the representatives of the Federal Council of Churches and the Christian Commission for Camp and Defense Communities,<sup>10</sup> as follows:

1. The appointment on its Army and Navy Committee of representative church leaders, to be nominated by the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* (December 25, 1940).

<sup>9</sup> See *National Council Bulletin* (June, 1942).

<sup>10</sup> This Commission is constituted by the Home Missions Council, the Federal Council, the General Commission of Army and Navy Chaplains, and the International Council of Religious Education.

Christian Commission on Camp and Defense Communities, and on local U.S.O.-Y.M.C.A. boards of representative ministers and representatives of local councils of churches.

2. Collaboration with the Christian Commission in formulating suggestions that might be helpful to U.S.O.-Y.M.C.A. workers, officers of Church Federations and Ministerial Associations, and to other local church leaders and groups.

3. Publication of manuals of suggestions.

4. Co-operation in arranging field conferences of representatives of the churches, the chaplains, and the U.S.O. workers.

The National Board stated further that, in this ministry to men in uniform, the Y.M.C.A.:

1. Recognizes the primary responsibility of the churches for the spiritual care and guidance of the men.

2. Reiterates its purpose, as a world-wide fellowship of men and boys, to aid in developing Christian personality and in building a Christian society.

3. Reaffirms the basic policy of the Y.M.C.A. to be of service to the Christian churches.

4. Recognizes that the Y.M.C.A. and the other agencies in the U.S.O. can achieve their purpose of "serving religious, spiritual, welfare and educational needs of the men" only with guidance and support from the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish communities of which they are part.<sup>11</sup>

In carrying out the provisions of the foregoing statement, the Reverend Marion J. Creeger was called from the local pastorate to become associate program director of the Army and Navy Department of the Y.M.C.A., with special responsibility for church relations and religious emphasis. Marked progress was made under his leadership, both in improving Church-Y.M.C.A. understanding and in developing active co-operation. One of the most significant developments was an extraordinary program of

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<sup>11</sup> *National Council Bulletin*, *op. cit.*

seminars on counseling, in which the Federal Council, the General Commission of Army and Navy Chaplains, the Y.M.C.A.-U.S.O., and local churches and church councils co-operated. In January, 1944, Mr. Creeger became executive secretary of the Christian Commission for Camp and Defense Communities, and was succeeded on the Y.M.C.A. staff by the Reverend Reuben W. Coleman.

After the statement of the National Board had been in effect for a year, the *Federal Council Bulletin* (May, 1943) said:

There is a well-defined cordial and mutually gratifying understanding between the Y.M.C.A. and the churches. They are working closely together nationally in the formulation of policy and program, and locally in combining resources for rendering more effective service. The work has an avowed and conspicuous religious emphasis.

In later issues, similar satisfaction has been expressed.

Simply to attribute negligence or presumption to the officers of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s for not taking the necessary steps to consult with the denominations before planning to serve the armed forces, and before entering into arrangements with Catholic and Jewish agencies, would be greatly to oversimplify the problem. There was, first of all, need for the organizations that had served separately in World War I to discover some plan whereby they could work together in another war. But more important and more urgent was the problem raised by the desire of certain Federal bureaus to minister to men in uniform outside of military camps, as the War and Navy Departments were doing inside the camps. Only by united, prompt, and vigorous action was an arrangement with the Government secured whereby the traditional relationship of voluntary agencies of a religious character to the military forces was preserved. The strong position taken by the Y.M.C.A. in contending that certain things could be done by religious agencies that could not be done by the Government was a major contribution to the

churches. There can be little doubt that the Y.M.C.A. (together with the Y.W.C.A.) was the most effective representative that Protestantism had available for this task.

### **Merging of official interdenominational agencies**

In December, 1941, a conference of eight interdenominational agencies was held at Atlantic City looking to the possible merger of these agencies. Represented at the conference were the Federal Council, the International Council of Religious Education, the Home Missions Council, the Council of Women for Home Missions,<sup>12</sup> the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, the Missionary Education Movement, the National Council of Church Women, and the United Stewardship Council. Absent from this conference were the following "co-operating, affiliated and consultative bodies" of the Federal Council: the Council of Church Boards of Education, the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, the American Bible Society, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., and the Student Volunteer Movement—all but the first two being "non-denominational" organizations.

In 1938, there was set up by the agencies participating in the Atlantic City Conference an Inter-Council Field Department.<sup>13</sup> The department functions through a committee and a Staff Council—the former is made up of members appointed by the constituent councils, and the latter composed of staff members who carry major responsibility for field administration and field services in the seven Councils. The purpose of the department is described as follows:

The purpose of the Department, broadly speaking, is to build the Christian community by translating the growing spirit of unity within Christendom—the spirit of ecumenicity

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<sup>12</sup> The Home Missions Council and the Council of Women for Home Missions were later merged.

<sup>13</sup> See *Forward Together* (New York, Inter-Council Field Department, 1943), pp. 7 to 9. Available from any of the constituent agencies.

—into co-operative action. In line with this purpose the Department's major functions include: interpreting the needs, experiences, and impulses of the local community, city, or state to national denominational and interdenominational agencies, and vice versa; assisting churches to create inter-church councils—within states, cities, counties and local communities—with a view to serving more effectively the needs of the churches in these areas; assisting organized councils to strengthen budget, program and staff; co-ordinating the major field enterprises of the parent bodies; aiding each of the seven national Councils in the development of its field program; planning field emphases and enterprises to meet unmet needs, such projects being jointly sponsored by the Councils which control the work of the Inter-Council Field Department.<sup>14</sup>

The department issued in the spring of 1943 a "Plan Book," entitled *Forward Together—American Co-operative Christianity*, which suggested increased activity of the department *per se*. The purpose of the Plan Book is "to provide a brief yet adequate statement of the program plans and scope of work of the seven national interdenominational agencies." A revised *Plan Book for American Co-operative Christianity* is to be issued annually. This title implies more territory than the seven constituent councils have previously occupied, and raises a question as to the intentions of the department in relation to the other interdenominational and especially to the "non-denominational" agencies that consider themselves also part of American co-operative Christianity.

The process initiated with the Atlantic City meeting in 1941, looking toward the closer integration of official interdenominational agencies at the national level, led to the submission of a proposed constitution to the Federal Council at its meeting in December, 1942. With the approval of that Council, work went forward on certain unresolved considerations; and the other agencies involved began the process of consultation with their constituent bodies. In January, 1944, the Executive Committee of the Federal

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Council approved the proposed constitution as then revised and commended it to its constituent denominations. The proposed new body is to be called "The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A." This Council would bring together into one body eight<sup>15</sup> interdenominational agencies and their respective functions. Because of the quadrennial and triennial schedule of the meetings of some of the denominations, it is possible that it may take several years to complete official action by all the bodies concerned.

The creation of such a National Council of Churches would probably result in enlarging the area in which the churches could act "on their own initiative and on their responsibility as churches,"<sup>16</sup> and thereby affect the Y.M.C.A.'s relations with the churches. More and more, the Y.M.C.A.'s opportunities either to serve the churches or to serve on behalf of the churches have come to depend upon the degree of its own proficiency, rather than upon any preferred organizational relations.

In light of developments just described, it is interesting that the British Council of Churches, when it was organized in 1941 included not only the Church of England, the Free Churches, the Churches of Scotland, Wales and Ireland but also the Salvation Army, the Society of Friends, the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A., and it welded together three interdenominational agencies: the Council on Christian Faith and a Common Life, the Commission of the Churches for International Friendship and Social Responsibility, and the British section of the World Conference on Faith and Order.<sup>17</sup>

Probably the time has passed when such a formal federation of the Protestant churches and the Christian Associations would be desirable or feasible in this country.

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<sup>15</sup> The eighth agency is the Council of Church Boards of Education.

<sup>16</sup> See page 173.

<sup>17</sup> Osgood, Phillips Endicott, "Why Don't the Churches Get Together?" in *The Atlantic Monthly* (April, 1943), page 77.

The foundation of the British Council, however, gave expression to a strong tendency to bring the independent religious societies into close affiliation with the ecclesiastical bodies, as contrasted with an apparent disposition in the United States to draw a sharp line of distinction between the independent and the official interdenominational bodies. The contrast is the more striking in that the British Y.M.C.A.'s had never established the close relation with churches that the American Y.M.C.A. had historically maintained with the Protestant evangelical group.

### **Interfaith relations**

Interfaith movements have continued to grow in America. The Conference of Christians and Jews has been a potent factor. But the United Service Organizations constitutes the most important practical expression of the interfaith movement yet achieved. It is significant that the National Jewish Welfare Board and the two Christian Associations, together with four other youth-serving agencies, in 1943 set up the Associated Youth-serving Agencies, Incorporated, to serve their mutual interests in regular peacetime work.

### **Ecumenical relations**

Turning now to the international scene, there have been important developments in interconfessional relations and in the Ecumenical Movement since the Conference on Faith and Order in 1927. The meeting of the International Missionary Council in Jerusalem in 1928 and in Madras, India, in 1938, in giving a large place to the younger Churches in mission lands, greatly advanced the solidarity of Protestantism around the world. The Oxford Conference on Life and Work and the Edinburgh Conference on Faith and Order, both held in 1937, approaching the problem of unity from a different angle, eventuated in a decision to bring into existence a World Council of Churches. A Provisional Committee was appointed for this pur-

pose, with John R. Mott, president of the World Alliance of Y.M.C.A.'s, as American vice-president.

While World War II has interfered with the completion of organizational plans for the World Council of Churches, at this writing (August, 1944), eighty-three communions in twenty-eight countries have officially agreed to participate. These include most of the major Churches of America and Europe, and some of the smaller Orthodox bodies. Others of the great Orthodox Churches are expected to join; indeed, since the Council is the direct successor of two movements in which they have participated from the beginning, some, if not all, of the Orthodox Churches are said to consider themselves affiliated with the new body, even though no official action has been taken.<sup>18</sup> A communication from the Provisional Committee to the Roman Catholic Papacy was courteously received, encouraging leaders of the Council to hope for some co-operative relation with that Church. This hope has been strengthened by the co-operation of Protestant bodies and the Roman Church in Britain and on the continent of Europe in relation to certain issues that have arisen out of World War II.

The constitution for the proposed World Council of Churches provides that:

... such Ecumenical Organizations as may be designated by the Central Committee may be invited to send representatives to the sessions of the Assembly and of the Central Committee in a consultative capacity, in such numbers as the Central Committee shall determine.

Discussions are in process regarding mutually desirable relations of the World's Alliance of Y.M.C.A.'s to or within the World's Council of Churches in accord with this provision, and regarding any other desirable relations to commissions of the Council.

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<sup>18</sup> Visser 't Hooft, W. A., *The Post-war Task of the World Council of Churches* (1943). Manuscript.



Meantime there has been very close co-operation between the War Prisoners Aid of the World's Alliance of the Y.M.C.A.'s and the Ecumenical Commission for Chaplaincy Service to Prisoners of War of the World Council of Churches. The Y.M.C.A. has also served the Roman Catholic Church in some particulars in relation to prisoners of war.

The World Council of Churches (provisional), the World's Alliance of Y.M.C.A.'s, the World's Y.W.C.A., and the World Student Christian Federation have kept in close consultation regarding their many common interests during World War II through the Emergency Committee of Christian Organizations.

In July, 1939, there occurred a notable ecumenical conference in which the Y.M.C.A.'s played a more direct and definite part than in any of those immediately preceding. This was the World Conference of Christian Youth at Amsterdam, Holland, to which reference was made on an earlier page (167). Five world organizations were responsible for the Conference: the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, through their Joint Ecumenical Youth Commission; the World's Alliance of Y.M.C.A.'s; the World's Y.W.C.A.; and the World's Student Christian Federation.

Fifteen hundred carefully selected and appointed delegates, from seventy different countries, were present. Although meeting just one month before the outbreak of war, this Conference was representative of the greatest number of nations ever assembled in one place. Half of the delegates represented church youth organizations; the other half were appointed by the three great international Christian movements: the Y.W.C.A., the Y.M.C.A., and the World's Student Christian Federation. The delegates belonged to many branches of the Christian Church, representing not only the denominations within Protestantism but the great Christian confessions.

For ten days, the young people from these diverse backgrounds listened to addresses by religious leaders from many countries and studied the Bible together. During part of each day they considered, in small groups, such important topics as: "The Church, Its Nature and Mission," "The World of Nations," "Education," "Nation and State," "The Economic Order," "Marriage and Family Life," and "Race." Perhaps most unique of all was the worship program, which included services in the Free Church, French Reformed, and Lutheran traditions, and services conducted by an African, an Indian, and a group of Armenians; in addition to celebrations of the Holy Communion according to Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Lutheran, and Orthodox rites. These various forms of worship were at once the focus of the profound disagreements that have torn the Church of Christ into so many pieces and the point, above all others, at which unity was achieved.<sup>19</sup> The Conference closed with a determination that there be more World Conferences of Christian Youth.

The Y.M.C.A. has performed one of its most useful services in the Church Universal through its contribution to the Ecumenical Movement. Individual leaders in the Y.M.C.A. have made important contributions, notably John R. Mott. In the World Alliance of Y.M.C.A.'s, the interconfessional Ecumenical Movement found definite expression in a non-ecclesiastical organization before the Churches themselves were able to come together. As the Archbishop of Canterbury said in 1942:

The two great Associations, the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A., achieved a reality of world-wide fellowship while others knew that it was wanted but could not find it. . . . The recent formation, still incomplete, of the World Council of Churches is the culmination of a process which began among young Christians.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See *Report of the World Conference of Christian Youth, Amsterdam, 1939* (Geneva, Switzerland, 1939), pp. 3 to 17.

<sup>20</sup> Address, broadcast October 15, 1942, in celebration of Y.M.C.A. Founders' Day.

The Young Men's Christian Association nears the end of its first century, in which it early adopted the motto: "that they may be one." For one hundred years the Association has provided Christian fellowship for the men of all denominations, and latterly of all confessions. As an organization, it has given service to all the churches that would accept it and has worked for co-operation among the ecclesiastical bodies. It has seen the major Protestant churches come into federation, and now it sees them and the churches of the first great schism drawing together. It is witnessing these and the Mother Church of Rome gradually increase co-operation in the realm of human welfare and the development of a better social order.

During these hundred years, the Association has pursued in the main an opportunistic policy, satisfied to work out its own relationships experimentally and apparently unwilling to reduce them to formulas or statements. As the several Churches within the Church Universal begin to express their unity in a definite form of ecclesiastical organizations, however, it would seem of greatest importance that the relationship of this great non-ecclesiastical, lay organization, which is also within the Church Universal, be clearly defined, in order that the Association may be in a position best to render the service in which it has developed special competence and in order that it may continue to be an effective pioneer in the further development of unity within the Church.

## CHAPTER XII

# Problem Areas in Y.M.C.A.-Church Relations

**T**HROUGHOUT ITS FIRST CENTURY, the characteristic relation of the Y.M.C.A.'s with the churches has been that of co-operation and close alliance. Indeed, the preceding chapters have been predominantly a record of co-operation. The creation during the last third of a century of the long series of national commissions by the Y.M.C.A.'s, to discover how the relations of the Associations with the churches might be made more fruitful and mutually satisfactory, has given evidence of the Associations' co-operative attitude.

Co-operation has been extended to an ever-widening circle of churches: first to the evangelical Protestant churches, then (unofficially) to non-evangelical churches, later to Orthodox churches, and eventually to Roman Catholic churches. However, the Y.M.C.A. has not always been promptly accepted—not by some of the evangelical churches in the early days, nor yet by most Catholic churches in the present.

There is little evidence that the Y.M.C.A. has ever been hostile to any well-established body of churches. In the earliest days, the Association chose to ally itself with the evangelical, rather than with the non-evangelical, churches; but apparently its motive was not antagonism to the latter but desire for unity, together with religious fervor within its own membership. The Orthodox and Catholic Churches may have regarded it as an unfriendly act when the

Y.M.C.A.'s collaborated in union evangelistic campaigns that were sometimes also Protestant proselytizing campaigns. But as early as the Civil War, the Y.M.C.A. did co-operate with the Catholics, through the Christian Commission, in distributing Douay versions of the Bible to Union soldiers. By 1915, Father Garesché reported in *The Queen's Work* that the Y.M.C.A. was not directly a proselytizing organization; and by 1934, it was reported that about one Association in every twelve was co-operating with one or more Catholic churches in some particular.

In their own membership, the individual Associations have tended to become cross-sections of the male population of their communities, with decreasing reference to religious divisions. The past two decades have seen the removal of barriers to the participation of members of any Christian church in the Associations' boards of control. Presumably this will facilitate co-operation with churches outside the Protestant evangelical group. Moreover, the points at which co-operation takes place have multiplied like the branches of a growing tree, and have extended from local churches to national denominations, to interdenominational agencies, and finally to the international sphere.

Tension has been a more or less constant accompaniment of this growing co-operation. Adjustment and readjustment have been necessary as changes have taken place in the activities and policies of the churches and the Y.M.C.A., and as the interdenominational organization of the former has progressed; and adjustments may not always be pleasant. Churches holding different views have taken different attitudes toward the Associations. But this study has revealed no persistent basis of conflict. Tension, in a setting of general good will, as has been pointed out, tends to be mutually stimulating.

There are discernible, however, certain problem areas in which not only tension but wasteful misunderstanding and friction have arisen in the past, and where they may

arise again unless avoided by intelligent handling of necessary adjustments and readjustments. An understanding of the factors that make co-operation difficult, of the circumstances in which tension arises, and of the conditions under which tension develops either into friction or a helpful stimulus now appears to be the most important prerequisite to continued, increased, and broadened co-operation between the Y.M.C.A. and the churches. Accordingly, we shall now consider certain minor and major problem areas that call for immediate and thoughtful attention.

### *Minor problem areas*

#### **Conflicting desires of churches**

This factor led the Y.M.C.A.'s in the earliest period to ally themselves with the group of churches with which they had the most in common—namely, the Protestant evangelical group. But within that group, the attitude toward particular policies and activities of the Associations has varied widely and still varies. Thus the Y.M.C.A.'s have never been able to please all the evangelical churches at any one time or completely to please any one of them all of the time.

The number of churches whose members have taken advantage of the privileges of membership in the Y.M.C.A. has always exceeded the number of churches with whom active co-operation was possible. This participation in Y.M.C.A. membership has generally been the forerunner of co-operation with local churches, however. As long as the Association pursues the policy of working with an expanding circle of churches, this problem of pleasing them all is not likely to diminish. And having pursued that policy for nearly a hundred years, the Association is not likely to change.

The Association must accept the necessity, therefore, of cultivating constantly the understanding, counsel, and

co-operation of the churches, especially of those that are least sympathetic and most critical. Church leaders, for their part, may well recognize that the Y.M.C.A. may never be completely satisfactory to them personally or to their particular churches; but that, on the whole and considering the many divisions among the churches, the Y.M.C.A.'s policy has been justified by its fruits. They can then consistently explore the areas in which co-operation may be possible.

### **Introduction of activities from secular sources by the Y.M.C.A.**

A major reason for the existence of the Y.M.C.A. has been to attract and serve youth in ways in which the churches have not been so well able to do. This has involved the Y.M.C.A. in considering and meeting the existing interests of youth. The very fact that the churches generally have not been highly successful in appealing to those interests means that the Y.M.C.A. must do something different from what the churches have been doing. But the unfamiliar is often suspect, and an activity that has had undesirable associations is very likely to be opposed by good people.

Accordingly, when the Y.M.C.A. introduced physical training and gymnasium work, formerly associated with prize fighters and circus performers, it was the subject of much criticism by church leaders. Similarly, the introduction of boxing, social games, dramatics, billiards, lectures on scientific subjects, sex education, social dancing, and open forums on religious questions has been the occasion for tension and even friction between the Association and some of its supporting churches.

The application of scientific knowledge in the field of religious experience and religious belief has always been a touchy business. Even the concept of the unity of personality and the symmetrical development of body, mind,

and spirit was at one time labeled "muscular religion." More recently, even liberal clergymen have been critical of the use the Association has made of theories of character development originating in the field of secular education, theories associated by these clergymen with "humanism" in the realm of philosophy.

These Y.M.C.A. innovations have not always fulfilled their promise, but the great majority have surely proved their worth, so that, in the course of time, many of them have been adopted by churches. In fact, one of the sources of tension has been the adoption by churches of activities in which Y.M.C.A. leaders felt a sort of proprietary right.

In short, the Y.M.C.A.'s inherent disposition to explore, to experiment, to pioneer, constitutes a problem area in its relations with the churches and should be recognized as such by both. A little more humility on the part of Y.M.C.A. leaders and a little more tolerance on the part of church leaders frequently would prevent tension from turning into wasteful friction.

### **The multiplication of activities and organizations**

Not only activities appropriated by Y.M.C.A. from the secular realm, but such things as the development of extensive programs of Bible study among boys and college students were found by the commissions to have been the occasion of tension and sometimes of friction. On the other hand, the development of young people's societies in the churches and their national organizations was reported to have alarmed some Association leaders, as did men's brotherhoods and institutional churches. The Y.M.C.A.'s Christian Citizenship Training Program for boys was pointed out as a possible source of friction. Denominational clubs and student pastors in universities, Hi-Y Clubs, and Youth Councils have all at times proved obstacles to happy Y.M.C.A.-Church relationships.

New activities and new organizations, either in the



churches (if they involve young men or boys) or in the Y.M.C.A., usually elicit two questions:

1. "Is the one invading the former preserves of the other?" Here institutional selfishness comes into play.
2. "What new opportunities for co-operation does the new development afford?" Here the concern for youth and the kingdom of God comes to the fore.

The record, as we have traced it, shows that, in general, the increase of activities and of organizations by both the churches and the Associations has increased the points of possible co-operation. This being true, the occasional necessity for one to surrender something to the other in the interest of greater effectiveness can hardly be classed as a problem.

### **Y.M.C.A. relations with social agencies**

The classification of Y.M.C.A.'s by the general public as social agencies and the recognition by Y.M.C.A.'s of the propriety of that classification have made a subtle difference in the attitude of both clergy and Y.M.C.A. secretaries toward one another. Even though the Associations make it clear to all concerned that they are *religious* social agencies, whose historic alliance in this country has been with the Protestant churches, there seems often to be a change of attitude on the part of the churches toward the Associations comparable to that which takes place when a grown child leaves home and forms new ties.

The participation of Y.M.C.A.'s in Councils of Social Agencies as full equals with other social agencies, in spite of differences, leads to a "consciousness of kind" with those agencies more complete than that with the churches. The new validations of their work, the new sanctions for their methods, and the new standards of excellence that the Associations encounter in their relations with social agencies are derived from the social sciences, not from the

churches; and often they are unfamiliar to the clergy. These conditions, added to the diversion of time and energy once devoted to relations with the ministers and church groups, give rise to a sense of increasing distance between the Associations and the churches.

Reference has been made in an earlier chapter<sup>1</sup> to the effect of Y.M.C.A. participation in Community Chests upon the ability of church people to influence the Association by their financial support. The constituencies of Community Chests have not infrequently been even more numerous and representative than the roster of taxpayers. The budgetary control of a participating Association rests with the Budget Committee of the Chest, which feels under obligation to reflect as truly as possible the will of this popular constituency and to deal with all agencies according to the same principles. Sometimes the Association's ability to serve local churches has been restricted. Nearly always the freedom to raise money outside the Chest for area or national enterprises has been eliminated, which often affects directly the possibilities of co-operation with the national denominations and interdenominational bodies. Almost never is the question of increasing the national Y.M.C.A. budgets discussed without taking into account the restricting influence of the Community Chest. Usually, these restrictions are the final determinants. The possibility of adequately supporting the work of the Y.M.C.A. in the colleges and universities is a case in point where collaboration with church boards is directly involved.

Here is a situation that should not separate the Y.M.C.A. from the churches, but one in which both should work together to get Community Chests to recognize and provide for the obligation that the Associations have to co-operate with the churches.

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<sup>1</sup> See pages 128 ff.

*Major problem areas***The lay, non-ecclesiastical character of the Y.M.C.A.**

The lay, non-ecclesiastical character of the Y.M.C.A. appears to have been the source of more difficulty in maintaining happy and comfortable relations between the Associations and the churches than any other one thing. The difference between the churches and the Associations is like the difference between the sexes or between youth and maturity; it can never quite be bridged, and so there is always potential tension or friction.

Every minister is familiar with the difference between the clergyman and the layman. He struggles with it all the time. He recognizes that the layman is more inclined to be practical, and not so idealistic as himself; more concerned with conduct than with beliefs; more interested in measurable actualities and less appreciative of symbols; more disposed to explore and experiment, and not so careful about conserving the values from the past; more interested in the scientific than in the philosophical. The layman may be more responsive to the unconventional and even impatient with the traditional; he may perhaps be more impressed by the mind and the will of the people, and less impressed by the authority that is associated with holy orders. Lacking the prestige of the pastor, the layman must depend upon man-to-man contacts in advancing the Christian cause; upon friendliness and persuasiveness and integrity. Moreover, the layman often finds it harder than the minister to accept a sanctity of the Church beyond that of all other institutions or to feel that it has a peculiarly divine origin. On the other hand, the layman who is engaged in the ordinary work of the world is inclined to have more faith than the clergy in the secular activities and institutions of men.

There appears to be a further difference between the ecclesiastical mind and the typical lay mind—namely, that

the ecclesiastical mind places much emphasis upon "statements" of function, belief, and relationship, and upon "symbols" representing these things; while the lay mind generally moves directly to the human need as it presents itself, adapting organizational function and relationships to the requirements of the situation. To the ecclesiastic, therefore, the typical lay organization seems opportunistic; whereas to the layman, ecclesiastical organization sometimes seems formal, inelastic, and somewhat detached from life as it is being lived at any particular time.

It is readily admitted that some clergymen possess more of these lay characteristics than many laymen, and that some laymen may be more ecclesiastically minded than certain clergymen. Yet every clergyman recognizes the lay mind.

When there comes into being an organization of laymen—a religious association organized around lay ideas, led by laymen, and persistent in maintaining its lay character—the clergy are confronted by the lay mind, both independent and self-confident. This is important here because, in the main, clergymen rather than laymen have represented the churches, down through the years, in their relations with the Y.M.C.A. One of the commissions quoted in earlier chapters expressed doubt as to the distinctively lay character of the Y.M.C.A. because its membership has generally included clergymen. However, there has been abundant evidence of the different approach to problems characteristically made by Ministers' Unions, for example, and that made by Y.M.C.A.'s

The Y.M.C.A. has also developed a peculiar type of layman, a "professional" layman—that is, the Y.M.C.A. secretary. With the years, special training schools have been established and official certification set up. A professional society has become an influential factor in the Y.M.C.A. Movement. These developments tend to differentiate the members of any calling from other men. As might be expected, tensions that are felt by clergymen and Y.M.C.A.

secretaries may not affect the non-professional laymen at all.

Occasional efforts have been made at certain periods to bridge this gap between the lay and clerical mind by employing clergymen as Y.M.C.A. secretaries. With some conspicuous exceptions, however, the results of this experiment, in all but Student Associations, appear to have been negative. Even in the student field, any great value of this device, in the writer's judgment, still remains to be proved. Either the minister has had to submerge his clerical characteristics and exhibit qualities typical of the layman or the effectiveness of the Association has suffered. If he submerged his clerical characteristics, his rapport with the clergy suffered. The employment of clergymen in liaison positions for limited periods, on the other hand, has often been valuable. So has their employment for special services, as in war work.

As a non-ecclesiastic organization, the Y.M.C.A., while at one with the churches in spirit and purpose, is naturally outside the organizational structure and independent of the official control of the churches. This independence has been jealously guarded by the Associations. However much Associations may have sought the counsel and cooperation of the churches and may have undertaken to serve and strengthen them, they have insisted upon finally determining their own policies and plans. Experiments with formal church control in America have been short-lived and unsatisfactory. The absence of such a control as veto power on the part of the churches, singly or collectively, has upon occasion been very irritating to the leaders, especially to the clergy, of churches that represented either extreme of church sentiment in the particular situation. While the three commissions composed primarily of clergymen, referred to in earlier chapters, agreed that the independence of the Y.M.C.A. from ecclesiastical control should be preserved, they were themselves searching for some consistent means of limited par-

ticipation in control by the churches. Only confusion and friction have resulted from ignoring the problem that centers at this point. This matter of control has become most acute when the Y.M.C.A. has undertaken service on behalf of the churches or has been put in the position before the public of seeming to "represent" the Protestant churches.

Having identified the lay and non-ecclesiastical character of the Y.M.C.A. as a source of tension and sometimes friction in its relations with the churches, attention must immediately be called to the evidence in the preceding chapters that it is these very characteristics that have seemed most essential to the peculiar service of the Associations. In the very beginning, there was the widest recognition by ministers of the peculiar ability of laymen, especially young laymen, to interest and influence young men who were not attracted by the activities of the churches. Ministers repeatedly testified that, even as members of the Y.M.C.A., they did not have the same access to the minds and hearts of young men as did laymen. The freer participation of young men in an organization under lay control has long been noted and has continued through the years. The Y.M.C.A. has, of course, not been the only example. The lay characteristics of democracy and unconventionality; the disposition to explore, to use the scientific method, and to seek new ways; the interest in the actual and the practical, the sense of the practical unity of the secular and the sacred; the primary emphasis upon conduct and character—all of these have combined to account for and sustain the Y.M.C.A.'s capacity to *supplement* the churches.

The specifically religious activities of the Y.M.C.A. appear always to have been a potential point of tension between the Association and the clergy. Whatever course the Association may have followed, some sections of the clergy have been ready to criticize. Mass evangelism in its day, instruction in the Bible, interpretation of the Christian

faith, the social application of the Gospel—all have come under wide criticism, either because of what the Y.M.C.A. actually did or because it undertook to do anything at all. In periods when the Associations have done little with formal religious activities, other sections of the clergy have criticized them for their inaction. Yet multitudes of men testify to the religious awakening they experienced, to the challenge to high purposes that changed the course of their lives, and to the clarification of their faith that came through these religious activities typically led by laymen.

The collaboration of the Y.M.C.A. with the special lay organizations of individual church bodies and the various interdenominational lay movements has generally been very successful. Happy relations have been noted, in local communities, with men's brotherhoods, men's and young men's organized Bible classes, boys' work committees, athletic organizations, religious-education organizations, and Youth Councils; at the national level, with such movements as the Laymen's Revival of 1857-1858, the Christian Commission, the Laymen's Missionary Movement, and the Men and Religion Forward Movement. In periods when lay activity in the churches has been increasing rapidly in volume and importance, the co-operation between the Y.M.C.A. and the churches has also increased.

Freedom from ecclesiastical control has allowed the Y.M.C.A. to maintain its lay characteristics and to express them in the great variety of activities and organizations of the present Association Movement. Quite as important, this freedom has enabled the Y.M.C.A. to attract the youth of an ever-increasing circle of churches and to co-operate directly with far more churches than have been able to co-operate among themselves in any official interchurch organization. The capacity of the Y.M.C.A. to advance the spirit of unity among the churches appears even to have been directly related to its freedom from control by any church or group of churches. In its fellowship, church differences have been forgotten and *the common faith of*

*Christians* emphasized. The Associations have also had great freedom of movement—freedom to experiment and to pioneer, freedom to move directly toward objectives. Undoubtedly, this freedom of the Y.M.C.A.'s from ecclesiastical control has been a factor in their ability to secure material support from people of all faiths and of no faith. In these ways, at least, the non-ecclesiastical character of the Associations, as well as their lay character, has enabled them to supplement the churches and to serve them, as well as the youth of America, with an effectiveness that would not otherwise have been possible.

We come to understand, then, that a change from the lay, non-ecclesiastical character of the Y.M.C.A. is extremely unlikely. In the future this source of tension will have to be recognized and accepted. Occasionally one hears a Y.M.C.A. leader, irritated by the criticism and apparent non-co-operation of the churches, raise the question as to whether it would not be better for the Associations to go their own way as Christian social agencies, rather than try to maintain their old-time relation to the churches. But to think of the Y.M.C.A., after a hundred years, as now becoming unfaithful to its mission as an ally of the churches is to misunderstand its fundamental nature and purpose. Then one hears church leaders query whether it would not be better to set up some co-operative agency under their control to do what the Y.M.C.A. has been doing. But if the author's interpretation of the history of Y.M.C.A.-Church relations is sound, no ecclesiastically controlled agency could serve and supplement the churches in all the ways the Associations have done. Both Y.M.C.A. and church leaders appear to be confronted with the necessity of accepting the tensions that inevitably arise from the differences in the nature of the two institutions and of utilizing those tensions for their value as a stimulus to both.

This contest between lay religious organizations and the ecclesiastical authorities is nothing new in the Christian



Church. It has recurred again and again in the Catholic Church; and also in lesser degree, within Protestant denominations. The rule has been that lay organizations in time became domesticated within the ecclesiastical organization and presently lost their lay character, with the peculiar values that resided in that characteristic. The Y.M.C.A. is exceptional, in that it has not been confined to any one Church and that, at the end of one hundred years, its lay and non-ecclesiastical character is as pronounced as ever.

### The federation movement among the churches

The Federation Movement in its specific developments—locally, nationally, and internationally—has been considered in preceding chapters. Its character, its growth, its influence upon the relations of the Y.M.C.A. with local churches and with denominations, and the new opportunities it has produced for co-operation between the Y.M.C.A. and the interchurch agencies themselves have all been discussed. It remains only to try to summarize the problem involved in making the most fruitful adjustments to the new situation.

The record is clear that, in general, the Y.M.C.A. has welcomed, encouraged, and assisted the Federation Movement at the local, national, and international levels; and has regarded it as promising the fulfillment of one Y.M.C.A. objective—namely, unity among the churches. Dr. H. Paul Douglas, in a study made of twenty-two Church Federations and Councils for the Institute of Social and Religious Research, published in 1930, reported that “no other type of community organization except the Ministers’ Union has had so much to do with the origin and early development of these agencies [church federations] as the Y.M.C.A.”<sup>2</sup> In this the Association, under the influence

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas, H. Paul, *Protestant Co-operation in American Cities* (New York, Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1930), p. 188.

of an opportunistic instinct, seems "to have followed the call of apparent need with inadequate regard to any rigorous theory of a proper sphere and function relative to the other agencies of the Church."<sup>3</sup> While in the main the federations and the Associations occupied mutually exclusive fields and the federations had not established departments of work for men and boys, there was considerable overlapping of functions that the federations logically should perform and those which the Associations had been performing or proposed to perform. "What figures externally as co-operation is a reflection of the fact that the fields of the two agencies overlap, and no one can tell where the responsibility of one ends and that of the other begins."<sup>4</sup>

The non-ecclesiastical character of the Y.M.C.A. has necessarily been a determining factor in its relation to Councils of Churches and other interchurch agencies. On the one hand, the Association has avoided ecclesiastical control; on the other, the churches quite naturally have increasingly preferred agencies under their collective control to serve and act for them, at least when the quality of the service was similar.

In communities where church federation has been highly developed, the initiative and executive direction of united worship services, evangelism, and social action have generally passed from the Y.M.C.A. to the Council of Churches. Service to the churches in matters of religious education has been taken over by the Religious Education Department or Council. Youth Councils, where they exist, are generally integrated with the Department of Religious Education. Co-operation by the Y.M.C.A. in the activities just named is given, not to local churches, but to the councils. Yet the survey of 1934 revealed a great volume of other co-operation between the Y.M.C.A. and local

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

churches, tending to center in through-the-week recreational and general educational activities, and in highly specialized services for men and boys. An up-to-date survey is greatly needed as a basis for counsel by national and regional agencies.

The solution to the problem appears to be twofold:

1. To work out clear definitions of the respective responsibilities and relationships of the Y.M.C.A. and the Councils of Churches, and definite co-ordination of their plans and activities.

2. To acquaint the clergy and the people of all the churches with these definitions and arrangements in order that their attitude toward the Y.M.C.A. may not be affected adversely by changes that may affect the immediate relations of the Associations to the local churches.

In determining the respective responsibilities of councils and Associations, the following statement made by the National Y.M.C.A. Commission on Student Work in 1941 seems to apply to residential communities as well as to college campuses:

Councils have proved themselves effective media for co-ordination and for managing co-operative projects in which the full knowledge and agreement of the federated organizations [or churches] are essential and feasible. Councils are often able to enlist the fullest co-operation of [member] organizations as such because they have a sense of proprietorship. But the area of full agreement within which councils can function is limited, and the process of securing and maintaining such agreement requires energy and time. Councils which attempt to operate outside the area of common agreement tend to reduce their effectiveness as co-ordinators.

Undenominational Associations, on the other hand, are able to function effectively in a much wider area. They have their own members drawn from the membership of all the churches; they have their own financial constituency; they have established relations with other groups. Free to act without securing the specific approval of other bodies, they are able to move quickly and with vigor; in short, to pioneer. In many inter-

church enterprises, the Association is a more effective agent of the church organizations than a representative council.<sup>5</sup>

At the national level, it appears to be assumed by all concerned that within the proposed National Council of Churches there will be conserved all the relations of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s that have existed between the latter and all the different councils thereby merged. It is assumed that the non-ecclesiastical character of the Y.M.C.A. places it outside the official organization of the churches and therefore outside a National Council of Churches. In fact, the proposed organization of this comprehensive type of National Council of Churches serves to throw into sharper relief than ever the distinction between ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical agencies. It appears to be assumed that the relation of the Y.M.C.A. should continue to be that of a parallel, co-operating, and affiliated organization.

The proposal for a National Council of Churches seems to make it difficult to postpone a clear understanding regarding such questions as the following:

1. To what sectors or aspects of the proposed National Council of Churches is the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s parallel?
2. What are the boundaries to be respected?
3. What specific co-operation and collaboration is to be undertaken?
4. What type of affiliation is mutually most desirable and calculated best to achieve the objectives mutually held?
5. By what organizational arrangements can the desired relations best be implemented?

The organizational relations with the different councils being merged have not been exactly alike in any two cases. It seems fair to ask whether the present provisions of the

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<sup>5</sup> Commission on Student Work, *What of the Future of Student Y.M.C.A.'s?* (New York, Association Press, 1941), p. 37.

Federal Council for consultation and co-operation with the Y.M.C.A. would constitute an adequate pattern of organizational arrangement in a more comprehensive Council of Churches.

As specific relations come under review, an understanding as to the procedure by which the Y.M.C.A. proposes in the future to carry on consultations with the denominations appears to be involved. In this procedure, account will necessarily be taken of the fact that the Y.M.C.A. has relations with the churches of denominations that have not yet become members of any of the several councils. The urgency of agreement upon such a procedure is illustrated by the fact that the experiences in the last two world wars indicate that, in the event of another war, the Protestant churches may insist upon representation, through an agency of their own choosing, in whatever voluntary organization is set up to serve the armed forces. If the Y.M.C.A. is to be that agency, it will have to be by agreement with the churches through the channel of a National Council of Churches, or through some other procedure set up in advance.

If the Y.M.C.A. were not designated to represent the churches, then presumably the proposed National Council of Churches would set up an agency for the purpose. In that event, the new agency would have to decide whether it would undertake to organize and administer services such as have been provided in the past by the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. If it decided to do so, then a whole complex of problems regarding the policy to be pursued by the Christian Associations would be precipitated, because it is to be presumed that the Y.M.C.A. would continue to serve the armed forces as it has done throughout its history and as the general public obviously expects it to do.

Such complicated problems cannot be solved satisfactorily impromptu at the beginning of a war. The negotiations that resulted in the creation of U.S.O. extended over

many months before actual military operations were begun. Negotiations regarding the relations of the Y.M.C.A. and the Protestant churches in a future war would need to be completed before either could satisfactorily participate in an organization comparable to the U.S.O. The quite possible contingency of another war alone calls for early agreement on procedures and schedules of consultation.

There have doubtless been values in the opportunistic policy pursued in the past regarding relations between the Y.M.C.A. and national interchurch agencies, at least in that such a policy has avoided rigidity through the premature crystallization of relations. Present, recent, and impending developments, however, appear to be precipitating the necessity for farsighted planning and definite decisions on the part of both the proposed National Council of Churches and the National Council of the Y.M.C.A.'s as to policy regarding relationships.

At the world level, the same general considerations are involved as at the national level, but the fact that the whole world is involved appears to result in some important differences. The World Council of Churches is to be a council of communions, not of National Councils of Churches. Its functions are conceived as more general in character than those of the Federal Council and much simpler than those of the proposed National Council of Churches in the United States. These functions involve, chiefly, conference and consultation between national and international church bodies and with other ecumenical movements. For this, among other reasons, some American denominations, not members of the Federal Council, have indicated their intention to participate in the World Council.

Relations of the non-ecclesiastical organizations to the World Council are envisaged as being more like those to the Federal Council than like those within the British Council of Churches. The same fear of ecclesiastical con-

trol has been shown by the non-ecclesiastical, lay ecumenical bodies in Britain as by those bodies in America. There is likewise in the World Council a similar sharp distinction between the ecclesiastical and the non-ecclesiastical.

The Provisional Committee of the World Council has set up a Provisional Youth Department, the primary function of which is to co-ordinate the various church youth organizations. When the Amsterdam World Christian Youth Conference was projected, it was not under the sole auspices of the World Council of Churches, but under a joint committee representative of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, the World Council of Churches, the World Y.W.C.A., the World Alliance of Y.M.C.A.'s, and the World Student Christian Federation. The distinction between the latter three world Christian youth movements and the church youth movements was maintained throughout the organization and promotion of the Conference. It appears to be assumed that the future World Christian Youth Conferences, which are definitely contemplated, will be under similar auspices and similarly organized. Thus, while presumably the three great world Christian youth movements will be invited to a consultative relationship with the World Council of Churches, some additional body in which these movements have co-ordinate membership may continue to be necessary to administer co-operative enterprises.

Apparently, the World Council of Churches is to be a council of churches, and not a universal Christian council. It seems increasingly clear that when a universal Christian council is formed, the great lay and non-ecclesiastical Christian organizations must be included as participants on equal terms with the churches; and that, at the same time, their independence of ecclesiastical control must be insured. Meantime, it would seem to be most unfortunate if, in the new emphasis upon the importance of the "Church" and the churches as such, a theory should develop that the Church Universal is constituted exclusively

of ecclesiastical structures; and if, in consequence, the full contribution of the non-ecclesiastical Christian organizations and institutions should not be realized within the evolving organization of the Church.

### **The increasing interconfessional composition of the Y.M.C.A.**

Problems arising out of the inclusion of others than Protestants in the membership and control of the Y.M.C.A. have become apparent as our analysis has proceeded. Account has been given in earlier chapters of the increasing interconfessional composition of the Y.M.C.A. in the United States and of the development of Y.M.C.A. movements in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox countries, where the membership and directorates are drawn largely from those confessions. The Y.M.C.A.'s recently established relations with the Orthodox Churches have not caused any problem in its relations with the Protestant churches and their interchurch agencies. The Federal Council has already received into its membership two of the Orthodox Churches. The practical problem arises primarily from the presence of Roman Catholics in the Y.M.C.A.'s.

A recent study of the constituency of a sampling of Y.M.C.A.'s revealed the fact that approximately one fourth of the members are Catholics. In many cities, especially the larger ones, the proportion is much larger. When a Y.M.C.A. has admitted Catholics to the privilege of voting and holding office, the question arises as to how its relation to the Catholic Churches differs fundamentally from its relation to the less co-operative evangelical churches in an earlier period. The answer apparently hinges on the Roman Church's position as to its own unique authority.

The problem arising out of the interconfessional composition of the Y.M.C.A. is twofold: (1) regarding the Association's relation to official interdenominational agencies; and (2) regarding its relations with the non-Protes-



tant churches themselves. No important problem appears to have been created in the Association's relations with individual Protestant churches or denominations. In some local communities, however, thoughtful observers have sensed an unwillingness on the part of the Y.M.C.A. to become completely identified with Protestant Councils of Churches because of the Association's Catholic constituency and a feeling on the part of the churches so federated that they can no longer treat the Y.M.C.A. as a strictly Protestant agency. These attitudes, however, appear seldom to have been discussed frankly and openly. The growing popularity of the Interfaith Movement has led Y.M.C.A.'s to take increased pride in their cosmopolitan fellowship,<sup>6</sup> and probably has incidentally led church leaders to greater appreciation of the Y.M.C.A. as a meeting ground of the confessions. But a mutual understanding of the change that is taking place and candor on both sides have seldom obtained, with the result that the total relationship between the Associations and the Protestant churches has tended to deteriorate, and old alliances have been weakened while new ones were being developed.

At the national level, we have observed the same problem in Y.M.C.A. relations to official interdenominational agencies, but the problem has been more clean-cut. In local communities, the interlocking personnel of the memberships and of the boards of Y.M.C.A.'s and churches have served to blur the logical implications of organizational differences and to maintain practical co-operation. At the national level this element of interlocking personnel is

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<sup>6</sup> Reference has been made from time to time in earlier chapters to co-operation with Jewish organizations. No extended investigation of this relationship has been made in this study, but it has been the author's observation that this co-operation has been increasing and that relations have been singularly happy in local communities, on university campuses, and in service to the armed forces.

A recent study of the constituency of the Y.M.C.A.'s reveals that about 4 per cent is Jewish, the proportion among members twenty-five years of age and older being double that average.

much less influential and an interconfessional organization is seen as ineligible to full participation in a Council of Protestant Churches. Back in 1906, when the Federal Council was being born, Richard C. Morse, then general secretary of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s, called attention in his booklet *Relation to the Churches* to the fact that the number of Roman Catholic young men who were members of the Y.M.C.A. was "greater in some instances than the number who join from any one Church." But in spite of this, he said, the Y.M.C.A.'s remained essentially evangelical Protestant organizations, confining their controlling membership to members of such churches. Even under those conditions, the Y.M.C.A.'s non-ecclesiastical nature was a barrier to membership in an official National Federation of Evangelical Churches. It can readily be understood that the changes, constitutional as well as actual, that have taken place in the control of the Y.M.C.A.'s during the intervening years, constitute another factor affecting relationships with the National Council of Churches now proposed.

There has been no denial of the contribution toward the spirit of good will between the Protestant and Catholic confessions that has arisen from the Y.M.C.A., an organization of Protestant origin, as a result of its service and fellowship across confessional lines. Herein appears to reside one of the newer and important values which the proposed National Council of Churches would take into account when considering its relations with the Y.M.C.A.

There are those, disturbed by the apparently growing distance between the Protestant churches and the Y.M.C.A., who raise the question as to whether the Associations should not attempt to re-establish themselves within united Protestantism as an exclusively Protestant movement. These persons are confronted with the question as to whether this is in fact a possible alternative; or whether, more probably, the forces that have formerly impelled the Y.M.C.A. toward wider and wider church relations

will not continue to operate inexorably. To those forces there appears now to be added the disposition within organized Protestantism to draw ever more clearly the line between ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical agencies, which operates to make impossible a return to just the relations with the churches once enjoyed by the Y.M.C.A.

### **Relations with the Roman Catholic Church**

Historically, the official attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward lay religious organizations seems to have been different from that of Protestant churches, and its attitude toward non-ecclesiastical religious organizations decidedly different. It may not be within reason for the Y.M.C.A. ever formally to seek or to expect official approval and endorsement. But, as a matter of fact, it has never had *official* approval from many Protestant churches. Absence of opposition to their members belonging to the Y.M.C.A. and to their local churches co-operating with the Associations in such particulars as they might choose have been the important considerations. In these respects, relations with the Roman Catholic Church appear to have improved definitely during recent years.

It will be remembered that the Commission of 1934 discovered that approximately one Association in twelve reported some kind of co-operation with one or more Catholic churches. The Catholic Church in recent years has established a good many local institutions comparable to a combined Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. In many instances, local Y.M.C.A.'s have given these Catholic institutions the kind of assistance that L. Wilbur Messer and other secretaries told Father Garesché back in 1915 they were willing to give. Nevertheless, in some cities not only the number but the percentage of Catholics in the membership of the Y.M.C.A. has continued to increase. After such continued co-operation with these and other Catholic institutions, both directly and through Councils of Social Agencies and Community Chests, there has resulted an expand-

ing acquaintance with priests as well as laymen and mutual appreciation of one another's work. Co-operation in the U.S.O. has helped. Optimism on the basis of such limited experience, however, might easily be excessive.

The Y.M.C.A. will have to give much more study to its relations with the Roman Catholic Church if they are to improve and become more fruitful. Clearly, relations may be either negative or positive. We have seen from the report of Father Garesché<sup>7</sup> and the *Letter of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office* of November 1920,<sup>8</sup> that, among the things that a Y.M.C.A. might do, the following have been disapproved by the Church: proselytizing; ignoring the Catholic's claim to the name "Christian"; undermining the Catholic's respect for the doctrine and rites of his Church, or for its authority, or for its claim to be *the* Church; and turning youth "away from the teaching authority of the Church, the divinely established beacon of truth, and persuading them to seek in the depths of their own consciousness, and hence within the narrow range of human reason, the light which is to guide them." The Catholic Church, like many if not most Protestant churches, appears to desire on the positive side that the Association, in addition to its particular contributions to the development of Christian personality, should reinforce the member's respect for the Church's doctrines and liturgy, and should strengthen his loyalty to the Church; that the teaching of religious doctrine should be given him by teachers authorized by the Church; that, where possible, Catholic groups should be provided with Catholic leaders; and that the Church should be provided with equal facilities for worship and teaching in Association properties where church facilities are not accessible.

In general, it appears that the Y.M.C.A. now avoids those things here listed as objectionable to the Catholic

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<sup>7</sup> See pages 65 ff.

<sup>8</sup> See page 135.

Church and tries to do those listed as desired. Presumably, this course is accountable for the reduced opposition and occasional co-operation on the part of Catholic churches. It is to be remembered, however, that the Y.M.C.A. has always been a challenge to the claims of individual Protestant Churches that they are the exclusive possessors of the whole truth, to the claims of any Church to supreme and universal authority, and to the abridgment of the rights of individual conscience or of direct access of the individual soul to God. These challenges have been resented by some Protestant Churches, and they may be resented by both Catholic and Orthodox Churches, unless great tact and tolerance are exercised on both sides. But it does not seem likely that the Y.M.C.A. will abandon its position, since to do so would appear to be a violation of its inherent and essential nature.

Clearly, therefore, deep study by Y.M.C.A. leaders of the history, doctrines, liturgy, organization, and procedures not only of the Roman Catholic but also of the Orthodox Churches will be the price that must be paid for mutually satisfactory and fruitful relations in the years ahead. On the other hand, the leaders of those Churches will need to be given a knowledge of the Y.M.C.A.—its nature, aims, methods, and organization.

## Summary

These, then, appear to the author to be some of the problem areas or factors that give rise to *the problem of relationships*—namely, the conflicting desires of different churches, the introduction of activities from secular sources by the Y.M.C.A.'s, the multiplication of activities and organizations by both the churches and the Associations, the relations of the Y.M.C.A.'s with the social agencies, the lay non-ecclesiastical character of the Y.M.C.A.'s, the Federation Movement among the churches, and the increasing interconfessional composition of the Y.M.C.A.

It appears that none of these factors has necessarily been

the occasion of friction or conflict, but rather that all of them have contributed to the possibility and obligation of the Y.M.C.A.'s supplementing and serving the local churches, communions, and confessions. These factors do, however, make necessary persistent good will, clear thinking, and action devoid of either personal or institutional selfishness, which ought always to be possible, since the church members who constitute the controlling membership of the Y.M.C.A. are part of the general membership of the churches. In its essence, the Y.M.C.A.-Church relationship is more than one of parallel institutions; it is the relationship of interpenetrating institutions, with a common basic purpose.

Co-operation has always been important to both the Y.M.C.A.'s and the churches. The Y.M.C.A.'s appear, with few exceptions, always and everywhere to have supplemented the churches usefully in the service of youth. On the other hand, the life of the Associations has been derived from the spiritual heritage of the churches. At present, the aggressiveness of governments seems to increase the value of close alliance for both the churches and the Associations, in order to maintain religion at the heart of service to youth. More than the interests of the institutions are at stake; the higher interests of youth are involved.

Relations between the churches and the Y.M.C.A.'s appear always to have been happiest and most fruitful when the interests of youth were kept in the foreground and institutional interests were considered only as a means to an end. This fact probably constitutes the most important single guidepost for the future of Y.M.C.A.-Church relations.

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